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A
COURSE OF LECTURES
INTRODUCTORY TO THE STUDY
OF
MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

LONDON:

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A
COURSE OF LECTURES
INTRODUCTORY TO
THE STUDY
OF
MORAL PHILOSOPHY,

DELIVERED IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN LENT TERM, MDCCCXXXV.

BY
RENN DICKSON HAMPDEN, D.D.

PRINCIPAL OF ST. MARY HALL,
PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

LONDON :
B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.
1835.

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TO

THE REV. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY,

THE VERY REV. THE DEAN OF CHRISTCHURCH,

THE REV. THE PRESIDENT OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE,

THE REV. THE PRESIDENT OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,

THE REV. THE SENIOR PROCTOR,

THE REV. THE JUNIOR PROCTOR,

The Electors

ON THE

FOUNDATION OF DR. WHITE'S LECTURE IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY,

IN THE YEAR 1834,

THESE INTRODUCTORY LECTURES

ARE

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THEIR OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

ST. MARY HALL, OXFORD,
October 1st, 1835.

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PREFACE.

THESE Lectures, it will be perceived, have immediately in view the class of hearers to whom they were addressed; but it is hoped, at the same time, they may be generally useful to any who have not yet sufficiently thought on the nature of Moral Science, or of its real importance and interest.

Happily for Physical Science, a degree of public attention has lately been attracted to it, which promises the best results in regard both to its advancement in itself, and its more general diffusion as a branch of education. I rejoice in

the circumstance; and would not by any means desire any portion of that attention withdrawn, or the zeal for physical inquiry in the least abated. But I am concerned for the cause of Moral Science, and am most anxious that it also should enlist in its service the endeavours of those, who are now so laudably promoting the well-being of man, by enlarging the resources of his mind.

It cannot indeed be expected that the same kind of general interest should be excited in the cause of Moral Science, which has been exhibited recently in that of Physical. There is not the like occasion here for communicating results of experiments, and comparing discoveries, and reporting progress, as in physical pursuits; and not that call, therefore, for social exertion in the

cause. What is to be wished is, that Moral Science might enter more into the business of education than it does at present,—that an introduction to that knowledge of our own nature which the investigations of moralists and metaphysicians have brought to light, should at least be held as indispensable to the educated man, as an acquaintance with the elements of chemistry or astronomy is generally esteemed.

The University of Oxford may seem to have done its part in this respect, by the provision which it has made, that works of Ancient Philosophy shall be studied by all candidates for classical honours. My experience, however, in the office of Public Examiner, has led me to observe, that something more is wanting on the part of our students, than a mere reading of the works of the

ancient masters of Moral Science, to answer the spirit of the University requisition. I have reason to believe that our highest classical honours have been not unfrequently attained by persons who, in fact, were ignorant of the very nature of Moral Philosophy,—who had read through the *Ethics* of Aristotle, and made themselves masters of his text, without knowing the connexion of that work with Moral Philosophy, much less its bearing on any of the questions discussed in modern speculation. The simply lecturing on any book tends to such an effect. A knowledge of the author, or rather of his text, becomes a substitute for a study of the subject; and the pupil is naturally rendered more expert in enumerating the arguments of a philosopher, than in examining his principles and weighing his evidence.

My chief design, accordingly, in publishing these Lectures, as it was in the delivery of them, is to put the student of the ancient philosophers on his guard against the natural effect of the system in which he is trained. I do not condemn that system in itself: for I think it most desirable that such works as the *Treatises of Aristotle* should be read with that exactness which the present practice of the University enforces. But I desire to furnish him, at once, with a supplement and an introduction to his more exact studies;—to assist him in making his familiarity with the text of *Ancient Philosophy* subservient to a more enlarged knowledge of the interesting matter contained in it. It is but little indeed that I have actually accomplished, in that way, by these introductory observations; but the active

mind, I trust, will find enough to set it thinking in the right train, and will make the work, what I intend it to be, an instrument of suggestion in order to a wider view of the points on which I have touched.

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LECTURE I.

MORAL Science has been the subject of more misconception and confusion of thought than other branches of human knowledge. Were we to put the question to several persons, what they respectively understood by Moral Philosophy, we should probably obtain a different answer from each. Some, with Paley, would identify it with "Ethics, Casuistry, Natural Law," as "the science which teaches men their duty and the reasons of it." Others, taking larger views, would extend the name to the science of human nature generally,—to the intellectual as well as the active powers of man. Some, again, would interpret it simply in a practical sense, as a methodical statement of the precepts of right conduct: whilst others would characterise it as the Theory of the Moral Sentiments. And most perhaps would be found, when they came more

fully to explain their views, to have very indistinct notions on the subject.

The prevalent misapprehensions are owing to the peculiar character of moral science, as comprising inquiries into the facts and laws of our own nature ; and in no little degree, perhaps, to the very imperfect manner in which its principles have been set forth by popular writers. That the inquiries themselves which belong to this head of science, are beset with difficulties of their own, every person will readily admit who has been the least conversant with them ; and that in truth there is no department of study, in which the patience of thought, and largeness of view, of the philosopher, are more strictly required. But over and above this intrinsic difficulty of the matter, every one brings with him from early education, from the course of his reading, or his own casual observation, some kind of general acquaintance with moral subjects ; and when he first proceeds to the regular study of moral philosophy, finds himself in the situation of one who has been badly taught and has much to unlearn. So that, without perhaps arrogating too much to himself, the professor of this branch of science may fairly claim of the general hearer a double portion of attention,

in order to bring the matter of which he treats distinctly before their view : not unlike the celebrated musician of old, who inflicted the payment of a double stipend on those who had learned beforehand of another master. The world, and his own desultory studies and observations, are here the bad masters of whom the student has learned beforehand ; and he must come prepared to forget the erroneous lessons of these, if he would sit as a genuine disciple at the feet of Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and purely drink of the wisdom of these master-spirits in the school of moral science.

I shall address myself accordingly, in the present Course of Lectures, which I intend to be a general introduction to the study of Moral Philosophy, in the first instance, to the clearing up of some popular misconceptions as to its nature, and to the illustration of it in contrast with physical science ; pointing out, at the same time, the strength of its claims to an independent and zealous pursuit on its own intrinsic merits. I shall then be able to proceed more satisfactorily to lay before you my views of the true nature of Moral Philosophy ; the principles on which it proceeds ; the leading heads

into which its inquiries may be divided; and the manner in which it ought to be studied. These will form the principal particulars to which I shall call your attention in the present Introductory Course.

In the study of the external world, every one readily admits his ignorance, previously to some initiation into its mysteries by the masters of science; and is disposed in general to receive the information imparted, without questioning it at each point by the assumptions of his own untutored judgment. It is true that the philosophers, who led the way in the improvement of physical science, had to encounter a fearful opposition from the rulers of public opinion, who felt a superstitious jealousy in the cause of true religion. But even here it was not physical, but moral truth, that excited the alarm and the resistance. In the admission of the new physical philosophy, the certainty of the religious system taught by the church was conceived to be overthrown; and the theory of the earth's motion was condemned, not with the reason of the king of Siam, because it was contrary to experience, but because it militated with moral convictions. In general, instruction in

physical truth is received with deference. Men listen with a kind of credulousness, as to the stories of a traveller over new ground, to one who discourses to them of the wonders of the natural world. Moral truth, on the other hand, has to stand the suspicions and cross-examination of every one in the crowd, whether philosopher or no philosopher. Every one flatters himself that he knows something of moral science—if not of its formal enunciations, at least of its real interior truths. And so we might say he did, if we admitted the Platonic doctrine, that knowledge is nothing but reminiscence. For, by close and well-directed questions, we might probably elicit from any intelligent person, all the fundamental truths of the science, in the same manner in which Socrates, in the *Meno* of Plato, shows, by the experiment on a slave, that the principles of mathematical truth are in the mind itself. Every individual so far has the truths in himself: they are part of the furniture of his mind; and, by appeal to his consciousness, may be shewn to exist there.

From the constant occasion, too, which every one has of acting on some moral principle or other, those principles on which men

habitually act, become to them as instincts of truth, and the representatives of all that is to be known in morals. They feel no need of a sage to discourse to them of what is regarded as already familiar to their minds. Practical rules, in fact, are not uncommonly mistaken for scientific, here, as also in other sciences of ordinary use. The practical arithmetician, for example, is apt to mistake the rules and processes which he familiarly employs, for fundamental principles of the science. The learner of logic confounds the technicalities of his compendium with the real elements of the process of reasoning. The carpenter probably little suspects that there is any more recondite knowledge of the subject, when he judges of the perpendicularity of his work, by applying his square and plumb-line.

It is just so in morals. Here there are abundance of practical rules, of admirable use for our direction in conduct, but which fall far short of the accuracy and truth of scientific principles of ethics. Take, for instance, the popular maxim:—"Do as you would be done by." How concise and ready a rule is here, to decide the waverings of selfishness! How plain a precept for the simple intellect and heart! And yet this rule, if understood as a

speculative truth of ethics, would present a very fallacious basis for the construction of a system. And so Paley well observes respecting it :—" I could feign an hundred cases, in which the literal application of the rule of ' doing to others as we would that others should do unto us,' might mislead us ; but I never yet met with the man," he pointedly adds, " who was actually misled by it."^a

Again, " Honesty is the best policy," is another instance to the same effect. For, suppose a person hesitating about some duty that requires a sacrifice of feeling or of immediate interest. How ready a correction and support, at the moment, does such a maxim administer ! so easily remembered, so plainly and closely put in epigrammatic form. And yet, take this maxim as an ethical principle ; and to what immoral conclusions should we not be led ! It would at once abolish all essential distinction between right and wrong, were it held as speculatively true, that the tendency of an act, its being expedient or not expedient, were the test of its honesty.

Indeed the whole of our Scripture admonitions and precepts are illustrations of the same

^a Evidences, Vol. II. p. 54. Ed. 1816.

point. For the Scriptures addressing themselves to men at large, and not to the instructed scientific intellect, avoid all statement of scientific principles, and give such directions of conduct as are of immediate practical force and useful application. They are greatly perverted if their wise and practical precepts, so skilfully and benevolently provided for the actual exigencies of our present condition in the world, are construed into laws of our moral nature. The fallacy and mischief of such a proceeding are not merely matter of inference. They are to be seen, not only as contemplated in the systems of theorists, pretending to found the whole of moral science on Divine Revelation, but as practically instanced in the lives of fanatics. But yet how ready are we to suppose, that the practical ethics of which we daily make use, are the substitute for a scientific acquaintance with the truths themselves; and to imagine ourselves moral philosophers, when we have not even saluted the truth at the threshold!

In the Protagoras of Plato, this point is touched with the graphic energy and liveliness in which that philosopher so greatly excels. The question is started, "Whether virtue is capable of being taught?" and the fact is

brought forward, that, whilst men use all pains to have their sons instructed in arts and sciences, they totally omit their instruction in virtue. From this fact an inference is drawn, that virtue is not a thing to be taught; since, if it were so, it would be the great endeavour and business of every one to procure instruction in it for his children; whereas, the abandonment of any such attempt is a proof that the thing is impossible and hopeless. But to this it is replied, as an account of the fact, that what is every one's profession is ostensibly that of no one in particular; or, as we say, what is every one's business is no one's. Every one, in a civilized community, is informed in virtue, to a certain extent; and therefore no one appears as a teacher of it professionally; it being supposed that all are teachers, and all may learn from all, in such a community. It may yet be true, therefore, notwithstanding this fact, that virtue is capable of being taught.

Now in this observation we have a picture of that state of things to which the moral philosopher has to address himself, in inculcating the truths of his science. His hearers are all engaged already in teaching his science, and he is viewed almost as performing a superfluous

task in bringing his lectures into competition with their unprofessional wisdom. I do not mean to say, of course, that any one objects to a systematical exposition of ethical truths, or that he dislikes the popular moral essay which sets forth the well-known truth with the charms of a graceful or dignified eloquence. But the fact is, that all receive with jealousy whatever is advanced in this science not in accordance with their previous notions. All feel that we are here speaking of things which it concerns them to know; of which they cannot confess themselves ignorant, as of arts and sciences, without shame; as moral agents, who have, during every moment of their lives, to be engaged in some of the phenomena to which our principles refer.^b For men do not like to be

^b Ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ἄλλαις ἀρεταῖς, ὥσπερ σὺ λέγεις, ἐάν τις φῇ ἀγαθὸς αὐλητῆς εἶναι, ἢ ἄλλην ἡντινοῦν τέχνην ἢν μὴ ἐστίν, ἢ καταγελῶσιν, ἢ χαλεπαίνουσι, καὶ οἱ οἰκεῖοι προσιόντες νοουθετοῦσιν ὥς μαινόμενον· ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ ἄλλῃ πολιτικῇ ἀρετῇ, ἐάν τινα καὶ εἰδῶσιν ὅτι ἄδικός ἐστιν, ἐὰν οὗτος αὐτὸς καθ' αὐτοῦ τάληθῇ λέγῃ ἐναντίον πολλῶν, ὃ ἐκεῖ σωφροσύνην ἡγοῦντο εἶναι, τάληθῇ λέγειν, ἐνταῦθα μανίαν· καὶ φασὶ πάντας δεῖν φάναι εἶναι δικαίους, ἐάν τε ᾧσιν, ἐάν τε μὴ· ἢ μαίνεσθαι τὸν μὴ προσποιούμενον δικαιοσύνην· ὥς ἀναγκαῖον οὐδένα ὄντιν' οὐχὶ ἀμωσγέπως μετέχειν αὐτῆς, ἢ μὴ εἶναι ἐν ἀνθρώποις.—*Plato. Protagor.* p. 112. Ed. Bip.

thought ignorant or mistaken in matters with which they seem to themselves practically competent to deal, and which they are known to be exemplifying, either well or ill, in their daily conduct. The rivalry between practical and theoretical men, so often observed in general, holds in a peculiar degree here. The practical men are already in the field; theirs are the actions; theirs the success in life: whilst the ethical theorist appears to come too late into the scene of action, and to be laying down principles and rules without which the work has been already accomplished. What Locke quaintly and unphilosophically observes of logic, that "God has not been so sparing to men, to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational,"^c is felt very commonly in regard to moral disquisition. It may not be stated in words, but there is a lurking suspicion in the minds of many, that it is a work of supererogation, to discourse of passions and sentiments and actions, of which every one is equally conscious beforehand, and of which not phi-

^c Essay on Human Understanding, book iv. chap. xvii. p. 244.

losophy, but common sense, is the best interpreter.

Particularly too among Christian hearers, the theological prejudice operates most injuriously in the same way. They are apt to imagine that Revelation has already done that for them, which the moral philosopher purposes to do. Their fears for the truth and importance of scripture-morals are awakened. They suppose that whatever is said in morality, independently of, or beyond, what the Scripture has said, detracts from that truth and importance. Because the precepts of Revelation are *practically* necessary and indispensable to him that would be truly good and holy in the sight of God, they therefore conceive these precepts to be also *theoretically* necessary for the establishment of moral truth: than which there cannot be a greater error. This is, in truth, to invert the case. It is to argue, as has been often observed, in a vicious circle. For the evidence of Revelation refers itself ultimately to our moral ideas. We believe a miracle as an evidence of a divine mission, not simply because it surprises us by an infraction of the customary order of nature, but because it is conformable to our purest, highest views of the Divine Being; and these views

are only the expansions and elevations of those instincts of right which exist in the heart. I am wrong, perhaps, in speaking of our moral ideas by the name of instincts, because it is not necessary for the argument. It is enough that we have moral ideas, however obtained ; whether by original constitution of our nature, or factitiously, makes no difference as to this point ; it is clear, at any rate, that without their pre-existence in the heart, no revelation could be properly accepted.

In proof, however, of the prevalence of a persuasion of a theoretic connexion between Revelation and Ethics, I may refer to the opinions which, I have understood, were expressed in this place not very long ago ; when the alteration of our academical course of education was under review, and an improved system of examination was first instituted. It was then proposed by some, that the ethical works of heathen philosophers should be discarded, and those of christian writers adopted in their stead. The proposition, however, as we know, was rejected, and the ancient philosophy happily maintained its ascendancy ; because it was thought, that to introduce the works of modern

ethical writers, who have not taken their standard of duty from the Scriptures, would be much more to slight the authority of Revelation, than to use those composed in entire ignorance of Revelation. What I would remark is, that a decision on these grounds implies that *revealed* truth ought to form part of the theory of Ethics; the notion which appears to me adverse to all sound philosophy on the subject, and, as I have already hinted, a misapplication of the business of Revelation.

I conceive this notion to be, in a great measure, a cause of that scarcity of ethical treatises which modern literature exhibits. In the scholastic ages there is no dearth of such treatises; for, in those times, a work on Ethics naturally formed part of a theological course of instruction. Witness the famous "Sum of Theology," of Thomas Aquinas; of which the most important constituent is the portion familiarly known by the name of the "Secunda Secundæ," containing an exposition, admirable indeed in itself for its exactness and copiousness, of the ethical system of Aristotle. But since the separation of philosophy in general from theology, whilst other sciences have profited largely by their independent cultivation, there has remained a

timidity of speculation in Ethics, a backwardness to use that liberty of reason here, which has been so beneficially adopted in other branches of knowledge. There is a sort of superstition on the subject; the demons of impiety and profaneness haunt the imagination, when we contemplate the establishment of moral obligations, independently of the revealed will of God concerning a future state of existence.

The great success of one particular treatise of Moral Philosophy, that of Paley, notwithstanding its entire poverty of information concerning the active principles of human nature, may be mainly attributed to this feeling. The unreal ground of expediency, indeed, on which Paley has rested all duty, has reasonably awakened suspicion as to the soundness of ethical principles so established. But the fundamental piety of the speculation,—making, as it does, expediency the criterion of the will of God declared in Scripture, and therefore merging Ethics into Religion,—has won for that work an admiration to which its intrinsic merits as a theory of duty are far from entitling it. In consequence of this feeling we find Moral Philosophy among ourselves consigned rather to the pulpit than to the

chair of the Professor. Or where express treatises have been written, they have been chiefly of a polemical character, in refutation of views regarded as hostile to Christianity ; as, for instance, the celebrated work of Cudworth, his “ Treatise of Immutable Morality,” written in opposition to the false ethical doctrines of Hobbes. It is only very lately that the present professorship has been revived in this University : my lamented predecessor in the office, having been the first appointed to it after a considerable lapse of time : and this circumstance may in itself be regarded as a symptom of the prevailing feeling on the subject. Thus it has been observed by the learned and eloquent apologist of our system, in accounting for the fact that no more distinct provision should have been made in the English Universities for so important a science : “ It is to the pulpit that we are to look for the fullest performance of this branch of education ; and it is in this service that we see called forth amongst us the greatest efforts of moral and metaphysical reasoning.”^d This statement of the case is exactly in accordance

^d Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review against Oxford, containing an account of Studies pursued in that University.—P. 178. Oxford, 1810.

with the general history of Moral Philosophy in our country. It may be enough to refer to the moral and metaphysical discussions of Samuel Clarke, as contained in his Sermons at the Boyle Lecture, and to the moral philosophy of Butler, as delivered in his Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel. It appears, indeed, that Paley's views of moral science were originally developed in the same form.^e

A circumstance which has strengthened the prejudice against an independent moral philosophy, is the fact, that the great deistical writers of our country, as Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke, set themselves to the proof of the independence of Ethics on Religion; whilst Cudworth and Clarke and others have vindicated the intimate connexion between theological and ethical principles. Christian writers, sensible of the value of that pure revelation which they professed as their rule of life, naturally sought to maintain *its exclusive* importance in that point of view; instead of simply evincing, as they ought to have done, its *superiority* and greater *practical* force in regulating our conduct. Sceptics in theology would as naturally feel the integrity of

^e His additional Sermons, published within the last few years, give indication of this.

their philosophical morality impeached by the doctrine of writers, who thus made pure morality to flow exclusively out of that system of religious belief which they did not admit. Hence they would be induced to search into the grounds of that morality, whose obligations on themselves they felt to be imperative, and which some of them practically evidenced in their lives, though unhappily insensible to the higher obligations of Christianity. Thus, both Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke have shown, and I think unanswerably, that the principles of morality are founded in our nature, independently of any system of religious belief, and are, in fact, obligatory even on the atheist. Sound, however, as the arguments of these philosophers are on this head; notwithstanding, indeed, that the system of Shaftesbury was adopted by Butler, and incorporated into his own;—the tide of theory has set in the other direction: and we still perceive this in the current opinion, that no unsound religionist can be strictly a moral man. I have noticed, at the outset of these observations, the fallacy of confounding practical force with theoretical, or of identifying the truth of a theory with its actual success. But it is worth while to examine this point further.

Is it not plain, then, that this opinion is a mere hypothesis, at variance with the observed fact? The history of false religion and superstition shows abundantly that idolatrous, fanatical, and absurd doctrines, tend to ferociousness and profligacy of manners. So far true religion is inseparably connected with pure morality. It is essentially distinguished from its opposite, or counterfeit, by those good works which are its proper fruits. But the case of a defective belief, or misbelief, of the truths of a real revelation, is very different from that of a creed fundamentally and totally erroneous. Wherever there exists what is of a nature to corrupt morality, its principles will be corrupt; and the life of that man who is the votary of such a system, unless so far as his speculative belief is overruled by the voice of better nature, must be depraved. Had Cicero been a practical believer of that Paganism which he professed in public, we cannot doubt that his private life would not have been unstained, as it was, by heathen vices. But his case, and others will probably occur to every one's recollection, is an evidence that pure faith is not inseparably connected with moral conduct, so that no morality can be found where this faith is not. Let it be observed, that I am not now

referring to that morality which obtains the name of holiness; to those good works which flow from the grace of God, and are sanctified through Christ to the life everlasting. To make these the criterion of the validity of ethical principles would be a *petitio principii*; as it would be to conclude, that no christian works could be done without christian principles, which it would be mere trifling to dispute. But I intend, in asserting the independence of moral obligation on any religious sanction, to refer, in evidence of this position, to the indisputable instances which have appeared, of an upright tenor of life,—of the duties belonging to the various relations of life,—correctly performed by those, who have wanted the higher inducements to right conduct, resulting from the profession of a better creed. Some, perhaps, among you will be able to point to instances to this effect in the course of their own experience. The truth is, pure morals neither necessarily follow in fact a pure faith, nor are exclusively the result of it. All that can be truly affirmed is, that where the good fruits of upright conduct are wanting, there the real adoption of a true faith by the individual must be wanting. The principles professed by the individual may be in

themselves perfectly true ; but they are false, as far as he is concerned : there is no evidence that the truth is *in him*. But we cannot argue back from the conduct to the principles, according to the hackneyed distich—

“ For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight ;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right :”^f

as we could do, if there were an absolute, inseparable dependence of morality on religion. Right conduct must, in that case, be the constant proof of right religious principles. Were we, however, to argue in this way, we should incur the fallacy of confounding professions of individuals with their real actuating principles. The mode of faith may be neutral in its influence, may be mischievous, or even accidentally good in its tendency ; still the conduct may not flow from it, but properly from the mere *moral* principles by which the individual is influenced. And in this sense, probably, many Christians are good men ; virtuous on principles of mere morality, and not through christian love and faith. For even the atheist, extreme as his case is, may feel himself under some obligations of virtue, so far as

^f Pope's Essay on Man, Ep. iii. l. 305.

he may perceive that virtue is his interest in the present world.

In similar manner it may be observed that wrong conduct does not necessarily follow from wrong practical principles,—principles, which, if acted upon strictly, without check or impediment from other influences, would be followed by bad consequences. The long life of Hobbes was, I believe, as conscientious as that of the most firm advocate of the reality of the distinctions of right and wrong; and yet the most indulgent survey of his Ethics must impress us with a conviction of their viciousness. The theory of the ancient philosopher, Eudoxus, that pleasure was the chief good, obtained, as we are informed by Aristotle,^g a credibility from the exemplary virtuousness of his life. But we must guard against the fallacy both ways; as well against supposing that true theories are always connected with right conduct, as that wrong theory will be always evidenced by wrong conduct. The most eloquent moralists have not always been the best examples; and, going over the theory of virtue (to use Butler's expression) and acting

^g Ethic. l. x. c. 2.

well, are far from being coincident qualifications.

This opinion of the dependence of moral theory on religious truth is, in fact, a remnant of the philosophy of the middle ages. Moral Science shared the same fate as Logic, and all other sciences, in that dark period. It was absorbed in the vortex of Theology. The name of Moral Theology, under which its principles were stated, sufficiently marks the nature of the speculation as prosecuted by the philosophers of the Schools. Its origin was traced by them, in common with that of all other truth, to the primary eternal Reasons subsisting in the Divine Intellect, the "Ideas" of the Divine Mind: for thus it was thought that a stable basis was given to the distinctions of right and wrong. Hence was derived evidently the theological spirit with which the moral treatises of Cudworth and Clarke are so deeply imbued; the ethical theories of these writers being at bottom but modifications of the Platonic hypothesis of ideas, as transmitted through the Schools of the middle ages.

Nor has the circumstance been without its influence, that some of the early Fathers of

the Church have characterised Christianity in contrast with heathen systems, as a "philosophy of life." Justin Martyr, for instance, describes his transition through more than one sect of philosophy, until at last he found rest in Christianity; and, after stating his reasons for such preference, sums them up with this declaration in favour of the religion: "This only did I find a philosophy both sure and expedient; thus, and for these reasons, am I a philosopher."^h Thus, instead of correcting and enlarging the moral lessons of ancient philosophy, the early Fathers regarded Christianity as an entire substitute for them. They seem to have treated the teaching of Christ as a discipline on a footing of rivalry with that of heathen sages; and, accordingly, to have rejected the heathen ethics as the profession of a hostile sect. I should characterise their mistake as an underrating of the holy, unearthly mission of Christianity,—an unconscious degradation of its sublime nature as a system of mediation between God and man; and a subordinate view of it in its instrumental capacity as a supplement and enforcement of the moral laws of

^h Dialog. c. Tryph. Jud. p. 225. Ed. 1686.

nature. They might have seen that Christianity interferes not with the principles of human conduct,—that its burthen and theme are *Salvation*, and not the mere art of happy living. Origen, however, who, amidst all his eccentricities of speculation, possessed a more truly philosophical, as well as a more truly christian spirit, than perhaps any other of the Fathers, has expressly admitted, in his reply to Celsus, that Christianity contains nothing original on the subject of moral duties. He speaks of the “common notions” implanted in the heart of every man, which Revelation must employ, and which, therefore, cannot properly be any part of the truth strictly revealed by any miraculous dispensation. But it was the arrogant profession of heathen philosophy to teach the truth and the way of life.ⁱ And this profession made it the ostensible rival of Christianity; so that Christianity was called upon, as I may say, to displace and supersede it altogether, particularly in the view of those Christians who had been philosophers themselves, and renounced their former set of opinions in becoming Christians. Whilst these renounced the dogmas of their

ⁱ Φιλοσοφία ἀλήθειαν ἐπαγγελλομένη, καὶ γνῶσιν τῶν ὄντων πῶς δεῖ βιοῦν. *Orig. c. Cels. lib. iii. p. 118. Ed. Spenc.*

sect, they naturally retained their philosophizing spirit, only transferring to Christianity the prerogatives of that profession which they had abandoned. Persons who have changed their opinions and mode of life, on deliberate conviction, and encountered the painful struggle with venerated prejudices, are apt to rush into an exclusive zeal for the new system they have embraced, and rashly to despise even the good part of what they have reasonably rejected as a whole. It is nothing strange, then, that even the moral philosophy of the heathen schools, though adopted into the christian system of doctrine, should have lost its independent character, and even appeared to have no independent existence.

Had the ancient ethics been a simple exposition of the laws of our moral nature, instead of being an attempt to deduce human duties from an abstract notion of the Chief Good, this delusion might not have occurred. But the statement of the object of Ethics as the Chief Good, could not but bring the ancient systems into competition with Christianity. To admit any other object of human pursuit, as the Chief Good of man, but God himself, seemed a disparagement of the truth and importance of religion. Nay, the more

pious philosophers of the heathens had themselves used language intimating that nothing but the Divinity itself could be an adequate final cause, or end, of the whole and every part of the universe. Aristotle himself is not insensible to this notion of a latent all-pervading principle as the Chief Good of the universe. It forms, indeed, the great ultimate principle of his physical philosophy, though in his practical ethics he altogether dismisses it from his consideration, as useless for such an inquiry. But the christian philosopher would at once substitute, as his Chief Good, the God revealed in Jesus Christ;^k and thus would be led to reject the heathen ethics as profane, and deduce his moral doctrines from the truths revealed in the Scriptures. In a great measure he would be justified in such a proceeding. For many of the heathen conclusions respecting the nature of man,

^k See this particularly in Butler's Two Sermons on the Love of God. In these he is engaged in showing that we have various affections tending to their proper objects as ends; that there must then be something which shall be an adequate object of them; and that this adequate object is only found in the perfect goodness of God. Let the course of argument in these Sermons be compared with the reasonings on the same point in the first book of Aristotle's Ethics, and we shall find them substantially the same.

though true in themselves, were rested on wrong principles. For instance, the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, the cardinal point of Plato's ethics, was deduced from abstract notions; and regarded in necessary connexion with its pre-existence. To receive the doctrine on such grounds was to slight the only proper christian foundation of the truth; "Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." And though the reasonings of profane writers were afterwards adopted by Christians, in their exposition of the same great truths concerning man's nature which had been taught in the heathen schools; and though the battles of the Faith were, in process of time, fought with weapons drawn from the armouries of Plato and Aristotle,—there was at first a dislike to such methods of explanation and defence, and an ambitiousness of displaying that the christian system was independent of this profane external aid.¹

¹ Εἴτα ἔλαθε, φημὶ ἐγὼ, Πλάτωνα καὶ Πυθαγόραν σοφοὺς ἀνδρας, οἳ ὥσπερ τεῖχος ἡμῖν καὶ ἔρεισμα φιλοσοφίας ἐξεγένοντο; οὐδὲν ἐμοὶ, ἔφη, μέλει Πλάτωνος, οὐδὲ Πυθαγόρου, οὐδὲ ἀπλῶς οὐδενὸς ὅλως τοιαῦτα δοξάζοντος· τὸ γὰρ ἀληθὲς οὕτως ἔχει.—*Justin. Martyr. Dial. c. Tryph. Jud. p. 224. Ed. 1686.*

Another circumstance which has operated against the independent study of Moral Philosophy, is the fact, (itself a consequence of the blending of Religion and Ethics in one tenor of instruction,) that christian writers have not only thrown into the shade all mere moral excellence, by placing it in disadvantageous comparison with the principle of Christian Faith, but also by exaggeration of the misery of the present life, have argued the weakness and insufficiency of human philosophy for the guidance of life. We may observe, in this method of proceeding, the relics of that contention for the mastery, to which I have already adverted, between Christianity and Heathen Philosophy; when each asserted its claim to be the only true Philosophy. In order more strongly to point the contrast of consolation and joy which christian faith brings with it, Christians have delighted in painting Virtue as the inmate of the house of mourning, and struggling in helpless destitution against the assaults of the world. They have been prone to overstate the argument for the future state of retribution held forth by Christianity. They have overcharged, accordingly, the burthen of evil observed in the world, with the view of enforcing the conclusion

that there *must be* another better condition of things, in which the present infirmities and sufferings of virtue shall be compensated, and every man shall be rewarded according to his works. They have not been content with the positive fact that virtue is rewarded to a certain extent in the present state, and the real evidence thence resulting to the promises of Scripture ; but they have, for the most part, chosen to overlook this fact, and to dwell on the scenes of evil and suffering which present themselves to a superficial observation. Probably their tone of thought on moral subjects was drawn originally from Stoicism : since that system of philosophy, being eminently ethical in its character, would powerfully recommend itself to christian moralists by the vigour and elevation of its precepts. But so far as Stoicism was received as a moral guide, it would suggest stern and melancholy views of the present condition of things. It loved to portray its wise man indifferent to the course of the world ; to exemplify, in an extreme case, the omnipotence of its theory of happiness over the most untoward circumstances of life. These pictures of life would be copied by christian writers. The force triumphant amidst them was now,

of course, that of Christianity ; but the dark shadows which had been spread over the landscape remained, to exhibit in obscurity and depression the efforts of mere philosophy. But, however this may be, the disparagement with which christian moralists have often spoken of the simply moral virtues, has doubtless had an influence in depreciating the importance of Moral Inquiries, so far as these have been popularly considered in their application to human conduct, and their subserviency to happiness. For though the question of positive usefulness is irrelevant to the dignity of a scientific inquiry, yet, if men are persuaded that a science professedly held forth as the art of life, is incompetent to the purpose for which it is designed, they will naturally turn aside from a pursuit apparently so unproductive. For the good which Moral Philosophy promises, is, under the fairest representation of it, remote and contingent. It demands a series of actions, a continued cultivation of our moral sensibilities. It presupposes no less than Religion, a disposition to believe its promises, and to look patiently for its good. But he that is already assured that its utmost efforts are futile and valueless, is hardened in a manner against the study of its principles.

It may be thought, perhaps, that this tendency to undervalue its lessons has passed away ; that there is a more general understanding now, of what is due to Ethics, as well as to Religion on the other hand. This may be the case to some extent. Still the prejudice on the subject has not passed away, so as no longer to require a caution against it from this place. You may trace its existence in the contemptuous manner, in which you will sometimes hear the virtues of purely ethical growth characterised as meagre, lifeless moralities ; as if there were no goodness, or worth, or power, in them intrinsically. I would not deny but that there is a truth involved in such expressions, if we understand them *relatively* and as negations of Christian Faith. But it is a fallacy to go from this relative sense to the absolute one ; and to suppose that the purely ethical virtues are not in themselves principles of real excellence, and of positive force on the conduct of life.

Hitherto I have noticed the difficulties which meet the general student at the commencement of his moral inquiries, arising from the state of his own mind, and in particular from the popular misconception as to the inse-

parableness of the theory of Morality from Revealed Religion. To show the proper connexion between Moral Philosophy and Religion will form part of my plan during the present Course of Lectures. At present I have confined myself to the task of clearing away erroneous opinions on the subject, so as to prepare the student for entering on his inquiries without prejudice. Let me now further put him on his guard as to the kind of facts and reasonings to which his mind will be directed in moral inquiries, that, being aware beforehand what they are, he may not be repelled by the disappointment of unphilosophical expectations. But I must defer what I have to say on this part of my subject to my next Lecture.

LECTURE II.

IN my first Lecture, I called your attention to the peculiar difficulties attending the commencement of the study of Moral Philosophy, arising from the vagueness with which the nature of this class of sciences was commonly understood, and particularly from the popular confusion of the truths of Morality with those of Divine Revelation. I considered the subject according to the most general and popular view; not discriminating at all between the various inquiries which fall under the head of Moral Philosophy, but merely taking up that notion of it which first occurs, as I conceive, to most persons, and which identifies the whole of moral science with one branch of it only, that more strictly denominated Ethics. My object being, in the first instance, to obviate prejudices, it appeared to me but consistent, to take up the general notion floating on the subject, and discuss the prejudices

arising from that to the independent study of Moral Science.

At the same time, however, I must not pass on to the further consideration of the peculiarities of this branch of philosophy, without pointing out the erroneous opinion on the assumption of which I have been arguing. I must put in an objection to the supposition that the whole of Moral Philosophy is comprised in Ethics. Such a supposition would exclude, for instance, the science of Rhetoric. But Rhetoric certainly is an inquiry belonging to the head of Moral Philosophy, so far as it is conversant with the nature of man; being employed in the study of whatever affects, or persuades, or convinces, such a being as man is, a being who judges and reasons, not more from the pure impressions of intellect, than from his feelings and sentiments. It would even exclude Politics. For questions of Politics do not concern the internal dispositions of men, except only indirectly. These concern the social relations; having for their object the discovery of those principles by which men are united in communities, and by which society may be directed to the greatest good of man. If we regard accordingly the whole of moral philosophy as satisfied in ethical inquiry,

we must exclude from it the speculation concerning government and laws, and the wealth of nations; and shall thus cut off from the pursuit of the moral philosopher a large and diversified field of knowledge.

Further, so restricted an application of Moral Philosophy would leave Natural Theology out of its range. But surely no department of study can more strictly belong to it than that in which we consider the relations of our feelings and sentiments and actions to a supreme invisible Being, and to a spiritual invisible world. If it be a fact, as undoubtedly it is, that our moral nature is not contented with itself, but is conscious of tendencies to a goodness beyond its own energies, and is thus carried, as it were, to God by an instinctive force, any moral science must be defective which does not take cognizance of this class of phenomena.

When I have appeared, therefore, to consider Moral Philosophy, in what I have before said, as convertible with Ethics, I beg it may be distinctly understood that I speak only in conformity to ordinary prejudices on the subject. What is the order of the inquiries which belong to it, I purpose to state distinctly on a future occasion. At present, let me state

my view of the subject, as corresponding with what Aristotle describes under the terms, *ἡ περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα φιλοσοφία*,^a “ the philosophy conversant about human things ;” and it is in this sense that I undertake to explain, as far as I may be able, the principles and method of Moral Science.

In continuing the course of general observations on the character of this class of sciences, I shall now proceed to illustrate it in contrast with the inquiries of Natural Philosophy, so as to bring before your view the just grounds on which Moral Inquiries peculiarly claim your attention.

The student, then, should be fully aware, that there are no wonders in this class of sciences to captivate the imagination, and awe and confound the judgment ; such as those which Natural Philosophy can place before him. The natural philosopher can appeal to some fact which a severe reason imposes on our belief, whilst the imagination is bewildered by it,—some glaring but irresistible paradox, the irrefragable consequence of ascertained principles ; as when he tells us of the million

^a Ethic. x. p. 455.

vibrations communicated by a ray of light to the nerves of the eye, in a second of time, with the utmost minuteness of numbers for each variation of colour: or when he astoundes and amuses the eye by the marvel of some mechanical experiment, and the magical transmutations of chemistry. But the moral philosopher has no means of bringing such striking contrasts before the mind. The paradox and its evidence cannot, in his case, be displayed in juxta-position, so as to give mutual relief and prominence. He has to work in an invisible and noiseless laboratory. The stone with which he builds is already hewed to his hands: “neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron,” is heard amidst his work. His principles appear only as traces in the water or the sand, effaced as soon as inscribed, whose fugitive forms he must call on memory to paint and perpetuate before the view.^b For the natural philosopher, the

^b Δοκεῖ μοι τότε ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ βιβλίῳ τινὶ προσεικέναι. ΠΡ. πῶς; ΣΩ. ἡ μνήμη ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι ξυμπίπτουσα εἰς ταυτὸν, κἀκεῖνα ἃ περὶ ταῦτα ἐστὶ τὰ παθήματα, φαίνονται μοι σχεδὸν οἷον γράφειν ἡμῶν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς τότε λόγους· . . . ἀποδέχου δὴ καὶ ἕτερον δημιουργὸν ἡμῶν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐν τῷ τότε χρόνῳ γιγνόμενον. ΠΡ. τίνα; ΣΩ. ζωγράφον, ὅς μετὰ τὸν γραμματιστὴν, τῶν λεγομένων εἰκόνας ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τούτων γράφει.—*Plato. Philcb.* p. 265. Ed. Bip.

material things about which he is employed, speak his facts in accents loud and clear. The experiment proclaims its result, so that merely to look on is often to learn. View, for instance, the power of steam in action, the vast and complex machinery which it impels, the work which it executes; and who can question the realities of a science so exemplified? But, with the facts of our moral nature, the case is very different. Consider the great fact of our susceptibility of alteration by Habit; and endeavour to compare that with the effects produced by education and institutions on man. These effects are as indisputable as the power itself of Habit. But where is the palpable evidence of the combination of force and result in this latter case, as in the former? The evidence is as real as in the former; but it must be made out by study. The analysis must be gone over, to a certain extent, by every one who would perceive it: he cannot at once grasp the principle and the conclusion, but must tie them together by dint of reasoning. Though, therefore, the Moral philosopher has many real wonders to discourse of,—though the facts of which he treats show that man, in his internal invisible nature, is no less fearfully and wonderfully made than

are the things of the universe without us;—what I would observe is, that he cannot put them in that specious form which is the alluring prerogative of the physical inquirer. He has to do with the thoughtful, the serious, the deeply-attentive; he speaks to the inward ear; he paints to the inward eye. He asks for a patience of contemplation which few are disposed to give, amidst the multitude of literary pastimes with which the world seduces even the votaries of science, the pains-taking of an intellect willing to toil for truth's sake, without the cheering view of a palpable result at each step.

Compare him even with the mathematician, whose demonstrations may seem to the general student at the first view far more repulsive than the study of moral theories. But the advantage of sustaining attention will appear on the side of the mathematician, when we consider the interest excited by an exact process of demonstrative reasoning in those who have the slightest taste for such pursuits. There is nothing by the way to distract the attention in passing on, no word full of sense and feeling to tempt away the plodding thought; but each step tells, each point of advance once made is secured; and we are cheered to find ourselves

regularly approaching the termination of our labour. Not so, however, with the moral reasoner. His is a task of combination. The lights of objects in his way are continually interfering with the principal light which he is endeavouring to throw on his subject. The student does not perceive that he has made good his ground at successive points, but it is only from a comprehensive survey that he obtains some determinate conclusion. “He has to feel his way, and look out on this side, and on that; to collect and apply his own experience, and often to suspend opinion for new light and information.”^c He must compare what he has before admitted with what is now laid before him, observe how each position is qualified by its relation to others, and sum up the whole at one wide glance. “The Principia of Newton, or his doctrine of fluxions, may be understood by a boy of eighteen.”^d But such productions as “the Iliad, or the Epistles of Horace, or Lord

^c Review of Edgeworth’s Essays on Prof. Educat. in the Quart. Rev. vol. vi. p. 181. The whole of this excellent article is well worth reading in reference to this point.

^d Ibid.—Γεωμετρικοί μὲν νέοι καὶ μαθηματικοὶ γίνονται, καὶ σοφοὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα φρόνιμος δ’ οὐ δοκεῖ γίνεσθαι. *Aristot. Ethic.* vi. 8.

Clarendon's History, were never comprehended till variety of observation, and many original efforts of the reader's own mind, had brought him to that point of view, from which he could look at those works in the posture of design and combination, in which they were seen by the authors themselves, and with some part of their reach of thought." The student in mathematical learning "has little to do but spread his sails, and the trade-wind bears him along; but the training and disciplining of the judgment are like the business of navigation on a coast, or in the narrow seas, when the seaman is always on the alert."^c That the mathematician may reach his point, it is enough that he resign himself to the direction of a dispassionate reason. The moral student must himself be animated by the spirit of discovery, even when sailing under the experienced pilotage of another. Otherwise he may, indeed, accept the truth as a logical conclusion, but he has it not, as the result of moral evidence: for he has not gone through that balancing of thought, that adjustment of probabilities, on which a moral decision is formed. In short, he has not

^c Review of Edgeworth's Essays on Prof. Educat. in the Quart. Rev. vol. vi. p. 181.

made the conclusion his own. He has not sought it ; he has not verified it to himself.

The dryness, again, of mathematical demonstration is known beforehand. No one enters on such study, expecting more than the simple refined delight of scientific truth clearly brought home to the mind. No one calculates on a various and rich intellectual feast, such as he who discourses of human life and sentiments is supposed to present. The historian, the poet, and the novelist, have already formed the taste of the generality, and spoiled them, if I may so say, for the theoretic disquisition of the moral philosopher. They expect him to embody his truths in flesh and blood,—not only to delineate the character of man, but exhibit man himself on the scene ;—not only to give general views of the condition of man, but picture that condition in “ moving accidents by flood and field.” The very taste, therefore, for these studies is vitiated by the seductive lessons of the unauthoritative teachers of moral truth. We are not to wonder, then, that the early moralists clothed their wisdom in parables, and fables, and apologues. Nor is it strange that Plato should have felt a jealousy of the poets, and banished them from his Republic,

as rivals in the art of reforming a people; and bent all the force of his vivid eloquence to teach philosophy as philosophy, and recommend the study of laws, and education, and manners: while, at the same time, he has bowed to the popular taste, by throwing over his own abstractions the charms of dramatic interest, and by introducing exquisite fables, the traditions of ancient ethical wisdom, the mother-tongue, which moral philosophy had learned in infancy, while nursed in the lap of religion. Nor, again, is it matter of surprise that Homer should be constantly appealed to by the ancients, as an ethical authority, “fuller and better” than the oracles of the Schools;^f or that Horace should be familiarly cited as “the moralist” by writers of the middle ages.

I make these observations, however, without admitting, be it observed, that there is any real superiority of interest in the pursuit of other kinds of knowledge over that of moral science. I should rather maintain the contrary;—that when once the mind can be

^f Qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,

Plenius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.

HOR. Ep. I. 2, 3.

brought fully to see the beauty and dignity of moral science, there is no interest that can compete with that which it inspires. The disadvantage under which it labours, is only at the outset. It does not appear to possess those charms which physical philosophy holds out to the world at large. The *Γνώθι Σεαυτὸν* of the Delphic Temple, may be viewed with the transient eye of one that little thinks of the wisdom wrapped up in that standing oracle of the shrine. But let us only commence the work of unfolding its meaning; and we shall then find that it involves mysteries of deeper and more real truth than the responses addressed, from time to time, to a more vulgar curiosity—a truth, indeed, which often gave the air of a real divination to the predictions of the Pythian. This feeling has been naturally expressed by Plato, when he introduces Socrates, observing, “that the country places and the trees would teach him nothing, but only the men in the city;” and not ashamed to show, in the intensity of his ardour for moral truth, his ignorance of the localities immediately beyond the walls of Athens.[§] It was in the same spirit that the great counterpart of Socrates in our own

[§] Phædrus, p. 287. Ed. Bip.

country, Johnson, used to express a partiality for a residence in London.^b

Xenophon, indeed, following the practical turn of his own mind, describes Socrates as carrying his love of moral observation and study so far as to ask, "Whether, as the learners of human things think they can put into effect the result of their learning, both for themselves and any one else they please, so also the inquirers into divine things (he means the laws of the physical universe) are of opinion that, after having ascertained by what forces each is produced, they shall effect winds and waters and seasons, and whatever else of the like kind they may require; or, on the other hand, they have no such hope even in view, but merely the satisfaction of curiosity as to the mode of such production." "For his part," continues Xenophon, "he was ever conversing about human things, considering what is pious, what impious, what honourable, what base, what right, what wrong, what

^b "It will be observed, that when giving me advice as to my travels, Dr. Johnson did not dwell upon cities and palaces, and pictures and shows, and Arcadian scenes. He was of Lord Essex's opinion, who advises his kinsman, Roger, Earl of Rutland, 'rather to go a hundred miles to speak with one man, than five miles to see a fair town.'" —*Boswell's Life of Johnson*, vol. i. p. 414.

sobriety, what madness, what courage, what cowardice, what a state, what a statesman, what a government of men, what a character formed for governing men, and other matters in respect of the knowledge of which he esteemed men honourable and good, whilst the ignorance of them merited the appellation of slavishness.”ⁱ

Now without agreeing with Socrates in that disparagement of physical science here attributed to him, on the ground of its unproductiveness, (a reason which modern discoveries have falsified in fact,) and construing his expressions as relative to the speculative physics of his day, and not as a general objection to all natural philosophy ;—no one will deny that he spoke from a real superiority of interest which he felt in moral studies. And if we do not feel the like interest, it may only be concluded that it is because we have not fully imbibed the Socratic spirit ; not that there is any want of attractiveness in these pursuits, or that the satisfaction of science is not to be attained in them. The current of popular favour is indeed, in these times, towards physical studies. These obtain popularly the exclusive appellation of science ; and

ⁱ Xenoph. Memorab. I. c. i. p. 8.—Schneider.

the name of philosopher is commonly received, as denoting one engaged in physical investigations. The vulgar demand for the useful is more obviously answered by such pursuits. But let us not be led astray by a state of things, which is a reaction from the former too exclusive attention to the internal phenomena of man's constitution. We must counteract the present tendency of Science to degenerate into mere sensualism; being impressed with the conviction that there are facts to be explored in these invisible regions of nature, as real and as curious as any which the external world exhibits; and that he who has faithfully observed them, as truly meets the wants of man, as he whose science multiplies the material conveniences and comforts of life.

Let us, however, advert to the cases of such men as Themistocles, or Napoleon, who have evinced an extraordinary sagacity in piercing through the complexities of human character and circumstances, and power in subjecting the behaviour of voluntary agents to their will. Or let us reflect on any instance, which may have occurred to our notice in private life, of decision of character. Whatever be the line of conduct taken by the person in whom such a quality is

found, whether the direction be to good or evil, we may have observed what influence he possesses in the sphere of his action. In all such instances there is a moral majesty which extorts the homage of inferior minds. Men are awed by a power which, instead of yielding to events, and varying with the variableness belonging to moral phenomena, impresses on them its own form, and shapes them to the course which its own inflexibility prescribes. They can understand material objects giving way to material force ; but they are at a loss to account for the impalpable invisible impact by which mind influences mind. Here, then, we see moral power condensed, as it were, and operating at an advantage, in a manner analogous to those exhibitions of physical agency, which experiments artificially contrived present. These instances, at least, are sufficient to arrest our attention to moral facts, and engage our curiosity in the search after their principles.

The due study, indeed, of history in general, cannot fail to awaken in the thoughtful mind a desire after some acquaintance with those springs of human power whose action it develops. When we see that there is a knowledge of the human heart, and an energy

in the materials of human society, that can work tremendous revolutions of the moral world, surely the importance of that class of sciences which has for its object the laws of these recondite and powerful agencies, must forcibly strike our minds. The student, indeed, cannot submit nature here to the interrogatory of artificial experiment. He cannot bind her in chains, and hold her imprisoned until she will give the desired response: he cannot put her to the torture. But by the light of history, he can bring his own mind to an artificial state for viewing the moral processes of nature, very much as the telescope aids the eye of the astronomer, and multiplies his observations.

After all, there may be in reality more room for experimenting in Moral Philosophy than is commonly supposed. It is thought that we must here confine ourselves, from the very nature of the case, to a passive experience, to observation, the opportunity for which may or may not occur,—that we must wait, in fact, for the *mollia tempora fandi* of nature, and learn when we may. But is not education in itself a vast experiment for eliciting moral truth? Are not the various institutions and customs of society—the

biographies of individuals—the books which record the inspirations of genius or attainments of knowledge—so many extant experiments, from which he who will only take the trouble, and bring the due power to the task, may learn when he will? The moral philosopher, who is truly athirst for his science, will be experimenting wherever he is. Of his studies it may emphatically be said, “*Delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.*”

What, in fact, was the irony of Socrates but an ingenious cover to the investigations which he was pursuing, when mixing with men of the world,—the means, not indeed of disguising his own thoughts under an affectation of ignorance, (which would have been unworthy of the philosopher), but of experimenting on the minds of others, and probing their knowledge and their feelings? For thus it was that he professed, not to teach, but to deliver the minds of others of the knowledge with which they were pregnant, illustrating his proceeding as a sort of *μαϊευτική*, an operation on the mind analogous to the well-known profession of his mother. In the real statement of the case, he was himself ever learning and moralizing on man-

kind. We have, accordingly, in the Dialogues of his two most characteristic disciples, a collection of these varied experiments. Each disciple, indeed, has thrown the peculiar colouring of his own genius over the scenes, in which he has introduced the great master of moral science. Both, however, by their observations, have given us, if not real instances, at least parallel cases, of his method of collecting moral information. And, to do justice to these invaluable writings, this is the point of view in which they ought to be studied by us: otherwise we shall miss their real instruction. Of Plato, more particularly, it must be remarked, that if we look for any positive conclusion, or decisive enunciation of theory, from the discussions contained in his Dialogues, we shall seek in vain for such definite results. The truth is, that he is not intending to inculcate particular doctrines, but is rather submitting a variety of inductions, from which he that has an ear for the harmony of moral truth, may collect a deep and copious treasure of wisdom.^k

^k May not many of the conversations of Johnson reported by Boswell be viewed in the same light, that is, not so much declarations of his own opinions, as experiments on the minds of others.

I will pass on, however, to the more direct advantages which Moral Philosophy possesses; and recommend it to your strenuous cultivation, by pointing out its services in rendering available and fruitful, all our other pursuits and attainments of knowledge.

Among the leading uses of Moral Philosophy, I would state, that it tends to check romantic contemplations of human life, and thus to divert a large stream of human unhappiness. It opens our eyes to see what the powers of man are, what their extent and proper objects; and prevents the vain attempt to grasp the shadows of an imaginary condition of being with which we have no concern. If a sound physical philosophy has been serviceable in preventing the loss of labour and wealth in digging for treasures in a thankless soil,—how much more worthy of praise and encouragement must be the knowledge, which restrains the heart from pushing itself off on an unvoyageable sea, and making for lands that are only clouds resting on the horizon of its view? If we congratulate ourselves that an enlightened chemistry has exploded the futile science of the alchemist, and that we no longer behold the mystic

devotee watching day and night, with painful solicitude, for the transmutation which shall place in his hands gold unknown to the mine,—surely that philosophy must be hailed with benediction, which no longer suffers the enthusiast to dream away his life in some impossible theory of happiness, by analyzing for him “the stuff which life is made of,” the hopes and the fears, the joys and the sorrows, the goods and the evils, of which it really consists. The danger here lies in a smattering of philosophy, in that hypothetical science of human life which the imagination creates, and which the heart of man is prone to indulge. The only effectual remedy against the delusions of a false science, is the raising a fabric of real truth on its ruins. This is what the chemist has done on that of the alchemist, and what the true moral philosopher does on the scheming empiricism of the human heart.

But great as the benefit is to each individual for the regulation of his own thoughts and proceedings, still more important is the service conferred by Moral Philosophy on the social relations of men. Ignorance of the nature of man, and of his condition in the world, will be found at the bottom of those

wild theories of the regeneration of society and revolutions of government, which speculatists or the seditious have devised. What is it that gives the long views of the statesman,—that enables him to see his way through temporary obstructions, and to predict the success of his measures at a distant period, and on a vast scale,—but the power of philosophizing truly on man, and the world as it is fashioned by man? A rash and empirical legislation for every matter as it rises to view, as if there were no *system* of government, but only a recurrence of emergencies and expedients, of grievances and palliatives, is not the characteristic of him who has drunk deeply of the fountain of moral truth. It marks only him who has formed for himself an ephemeral philosophy, out of the shreds which irregular observation has happened to collect. He may think that he is building on the experience of past ages, and cite the passages of history as verifications of his theories. But unless this experience is well digested, unless these passages are first reduced to the general laws of which they are instances, his method of government is founded on mere phenomena, and not on the truth of things.

History indeed, disjoined from Moral Philosophy, is most delusive. “A man may be historically wise, but in practice a fool.” He may “attend only to the shell and husk of history¹.” And nothing, perhaps, has done more mischief to society than that appearance of sober wisdom, and resemblance to tried policy, which an unphilosophical reference to historical facts is able to confer on the most unsubstantial theories. Such was the shallow philosophy by which the French Revolution vindicated its outrages on human nature;—such, too, was the fearful misapplication which, in the times of our own Civil War, a sinister fanaticism made of the older Scriptures;—men profanely justifying their own unhallowed doings, by reference to the extraordinary providences of God. Nor is this proceeding the practice of other days only. No topic is more common with the censorious, than to refer to the experience of past times, as evidence against what they wish to malign. The examples, for instance, of primitive manners in the infancy of the christian church are pointed at, as the specimen of what the manners of an ecclesiastic ought to be in these

¹ Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution.

days; the precedent, as viewed in itself, giving a plausibility to the scandal built on the comparison. Or, again, the various maxims of duty current among different people are brought forward, as proofs that the law of right is variable, and dependent on arbitrary institution.

But how shall we solve the fallacy of these palpable citations of experience, this officious instancing of the facts of history, but by the spirit of a sound moral philosophy? This will teach us that we must first analyse the facts which we would cite, and draw out the principles involved in them. It will train us to look beyond the mere surface of things; not to expect fac-similes, but counter-parts, and correspondences, and analogies, in the course of the world; and, while we learn from resemblances, to learn also equally from the differences of things; to read, in short, in the pages of history, not the mere annals of events, but the laws of actions. To a mind not versed in Moral Philosophy, every event recorded in history appears of equal importance: or else, while it is intent only on those actions which make the greatest figure on the stage of the world, as wars and revolutions, the earthquakes and meteors of the

moral world,—those pass unnoticed and unexamined, which have less ruffled the tide of affairs, but are often the surest indication of the way in which the tide is setting. Science gives a different standard of the great and the little, from that which the imagination suggests to the reader of history, or the observer of human life. It saves at once the needless labour of a vain undigested accumulation of facts, and carries the mind to the selection of those, however obscure and comparatively insignificant, which have a real bearing on the truth of human nature.

The application, again, of a sound moral philosophy to the facts, whether of history or of observation, will prevent our drawing conclusions from them, as if they were so many material phenomena;—a proceeding by no means uncommon with those who have theorized on the principles by which social improvement may be effected. One who has duly studied the moral nature of man, will be continually sensible, that there can be no sound theory of human conduct, even where the intellect seems to be exclusively concerned, which leaves out the consideration of those powerful influences which lurk in the

human heart. A plan of education, for instance, may be devised, which shall be admirably adapted for opening and invigorating the intellect, when viewed in itself. But how shall we get it to be acted on? How shall we ensure the development of the intellect, unless we interest also those feelings, which, in the complex being, man, are inseparably combined with the intellectual powers? since it is not reason that thinks, and judges, and infers, but reasoning man—not the abstract principle of intellect, but intellect as it physically exists, and as it is modified and controlled by our active and sensitive nature. The study of Moral Philosophy will counteract the tendency of the mind to mould society according to the theoretic perfection of abstract views. It will correct ideal plans of social improvement, as physical science modifies the conclusions of pure mathematics. It will lead us to calculate resistances. We shall be put on our guard against the supposition, that the regularity and beauty of artificial systems can be maintained against all those forces which are pent up within the human breast, ready to visit any pressure from without, and too subtile to be confined by any chain of man's contrivance. The

irregularities and inequalities of society are, in fact, the natural manifestation of the various active principles of our nature. The unevenness of the ground is produced by the agency of these internal fires: and though the hand of art may level it, the labour is vainly spent: for the same causes, continuing to act, will again break forth and diversify the surface. The restrictions as to property at Sparta could not prevent the accumulation of it in private hands: nor has an aristocratic order ever failed to arise in some form or other out of the most democratic elements. How much vain disturbance, how much severe suffering, might have been saved, had a diffused knowledge of the principles of human nature established a general conviction, that there were impossibilities in the moral no less than in the physical world!

But there is a still further and higher use of a sound Moral Philosophy (which I cannot omit mentioning in this place, though I shall have occasion to touch on the subject more explicitly in my next Lecture); and that is,—its subserviency to moderate and direct our views in Religion. Whilst religion purifies, and elevates, and sanctifies the moral feelings,

it can effect this divine purpose only by going hand in hand with those very principles which it would transform to the image of God. For no true religion can contradict the moral nature of man; and the gospel is eminently the gift of one who "knew what was in man." Surely, therefore, when we come to interrogate our nature, we shall not receive any answer at variance with the truth concerning it in the volume of revelation. If religious views accordingly distort the facts of our nature,—if, in any scheme of theology, man is represented as a different being from what he is found by observation,—if the testimony of the sacred text is so interpreted as to disagree with that of our moral experience,—we have a clear sign, that such systems of doctrine are erroneously conceived; that they are not, in all their lineaments, faithful portraitures of the self-knowing religion which proceeded from Jesus Christ.

Ignorance of moral truth, or at any rate inattention to its principles, has, indeed, been an abundant source of misbelief in religion. How, for instance, could a doctrine of a total corruption of human nature have been asserted, if the information, which moral philosophy gives us of ourselves, had not been

slighted. Were it distinctly seen, (as moral science enables us to see,) that,—as there could be no virtue in man on the theory of a total corruption of human nature, so neither could there be vice,—religionists could hardly suffer their piety so to exaggerate the truth, as to destroy the very existence of right and wrong. For the nature of man, on their hypothesis, is reduced to that of brutes: the evil of his nature becomes then only as the ferociousness of the tiger, or the subtlety of the serpent—a noxious and fearful principle, but not a vice; because there is no violation of the authority of a better principle, or law of right, within the heart.^m

Again, had Moral Philosophy been duly consulted, we should not have heard of a

^m "Ὡστε καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὰ θηρία οὐκ ἀκρατῆ, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει καθόλου ὑπόληψιν, ἀλλὰ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα φαντασίαν καὶ μνήμην. *Aristot. Ethic.* vii. 3. "Ἐλαττον δὲ θηριότης κακίας· φοβερώτερον δέ· οὐ γὰρ διέφθαρται τὸ βέλτιστον, ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔχει . . . ἀσινεστέρα γὰρ ἡ φαυλότης αἰεὶ, ἢ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος ἀρχήν· ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἀρχή μυριοπλάσια γὰρ ἂν κακὰ ποιήσειεν ἄνθρωπος κακὸς θηρίον. *Ibid.* c. 6. See also Butler in the Preface to his Sermons: —"Brutes, in acting according to their bodily constitution and circumstances, act suitably to their whole nature. . . . Mankind also, in acting thus, would act suitably to their whole nature, if no more were to be said of man's nature than what has been now said," &c.—P. 15.

system of doctrines under the christian name, which leaves the heart of man without an altar, where it may lay its burthen of guilt, and pour out its offering of prayers and tears. A mere unfeeling reason may discern the abstract efficacy of repentance to retrieve the sinner; but he will not argue so, who listens to the pleadings of his feelings, the wise monitors within him, the sentinels stationed at every bye-path, to restrain the aberrations of the intellect. A sound moral philosophy sending us to learn wisdom from the heart, no less than from the head, will direct us in inquiring what is *rational*, to take our standard of rationality, by what approves itself to our *whole* nature; not to one part only—by what consoles us, and elevates and kindles our affections towards God, not by that only which makes us think of Him with precision and consistency.

Indeed, but for the neglect of the independent study of Moral Philosophy, the christian world would not have seen elaborate systems of theology erected, where men should have rather humbly *felt* the truth, and bowed obedience to it. I remarked to you before, that during the dominion of scholasticism, there existed no moral philosophy, properly

so called; but a substitute for it under the name of Moral Theology. Taking the form into which all the science of the age was thrown, that of questions, with the arguments on them and conclusions, it was no inquiry into the laws of human nature, but rather a solution of doubts, and cases of conscience, adapted to the needs of the theological disputant and the confessor.ⁿ The lights of a true philosophy were certainly struck out occasionally by powerful minds even acting thus at a disadvantage, and scattering their bread on the waters and the waste. Much, too, of sound moral wisdom was brought to bear on their discussions, through the happy influence of Aristotle's ethics, which flourished in the schools. Still there was nothing in the scholastic ethics to counteract the importunate pressure on the mind of a speculative theology; nothing to soften down the hard outline of logical deductions, and to give the feelings their proper elasticity and power. Men were not led to know themselves, or to recognize the yearnings of their moral nature as real elements of truth; but squandered their whole substance on the demands of an

ⁿ After this model Bishop Taylor entitles his great ethical work *Ductor Dubitantium*, or, *The Rule of Conscience*.

insatiable, inexorable dogmatism, reserving nothing for the silent, unthought of, wants of the heart.

The paramount importance of Moral Philosophy will, however, more distinctly appear, if we consider that it is the knowledge to which all other knowledge is ultimately referred, and by which the very form of Truth is circumscribed and limited. Though it is easy to find objections against the position of the ancient philosopher, that "man is the measure of all things;" the theory is undoubtedly true in this sense, that we have no knowledge beyond what is relative to our nature and condition in the world. The light vouchsafed to us is adjusted to our present capacities and wants. To know what God is in his own nature; what the soul is; what the principle is by which bodies gravitate towards one another;—this evidently is not the kind of truth which corresponds with such a being as man. It is conceivable that we might know these several truths without being enabled to act our part at all the better for such knowledge, in the condition in which we have been placed. But to know by observation on ourselves and the world around us, that

God is with us; that we have a principle of enduring vitality in our own nature; that bodies mutually gravitate;—these, and such like, are informations as to the manner in which we are to conduct ourselves in that state of things in the midst of which we live and move. The knowledge, indeed, of nature from phenomena, the only knowledge that we are able to obtain, is precisely that which serves for action. It is a language which nature particularly addresses *to us*, telling us by what forces and influences we are surrounded, and consequently how to regulate our own behaviour in regard to them, or to apply them to our use. A knowledge of ourselves, accordingly, of our own nature and condition, is the ultimate philosophy, the last word, into which all science resolves itself and ends. We must study Moral Philosophy as containing in it the inward truths, which are the key to the cypher of nature—the principles, from which all other truth derives its character and expression.

In concluding these remarks, I may be allowed to depart from the strict office of the lecturer, and assume that of the advocate. Let me exhort that we should proceed in

that path which our University discipline of education marks out for us. “*Hiæ tibi erunt artes,*” I would say to each member of our body. Make that course of high and masculine literature which you are pursuing, effectual to the refinement, and strengthening, and elevation of your minds, by combining with it the study of a sound philosophy of human nature—the science, of which, by the very direction of your academical reading, you have already some of the noblest documents placed in your hands.

LECTURE III.

FROM a general survey of the character and importance of Moral Philosophy, I proceed to the nearer consideration of it in its internal system. In the present Course of Lectures, indeed, I do not mean to examine any of its principles in detail, or to discuss any particular system. When I speak, therefore, of the internal view of its nature, I do not extend this expression beyond the compass which I have originally proposed to myself. My object being simply to introduce you to the study of moral science, I shall accordingly still be employed only on general views of its nature.

I purpose, accordingly, in this and the following Lectures, to treat of the fundamental principle on which all moral inquiry proceeds; the method of investigation which it pursues; and the evidence which it possesses; and so to pass on to the consideration of the several

inquiries into which it branches, and the method by which it may most effectually be studied.

The first thing to be inquired into, when we come to study any science, is, what are the facts about which it is conversant? what is the class of phenomena to which it directs our attention? If a science is the methodical acquaintance with certain objects in nature, these objects must have in them some principle of combination, some point of resemblance, in order to their classification and arrangement. This agreement or resemblance is the object of the philosophical eye; and when once it is seized, the subsequent investigation is, to trace the laws of the observed correspondence, and to characterize and fix in the terms of theories the transient, indefinite, and perplexed phenomena of observation. The line of observation is marked out in Nature; and then Science proceeds to erect its landmarks, and to record, for the general information of men, the truths which it has collected and noted.

For Science, it should be observed, has no higher ambition than to reduce what is complex in nature to the most simple expression;

what is fugitive or unstable, to steadiness and uniformity. I should add, relatively to the mind of man : for otherwise, it might be supposed, that Nature herself is all confusion and uncertainty, and that Science brings order out of the chaos, and impresses stability on the restless flowing tide. But such is not the case. Nature herself is regular and simple, and beautiful and good. But man sees not the outlines of her perfection, previously to discipline of himself. His mind's eye is dazzled and confounded, when it attempts to survey the operations of Nature. He feels that there is too much for him to take in at a glance ; that he must have some method by which his view may be directed and assisted—some key put into his hand by which he may unlock the treasures of Nature. This method, this key, is Science. It establishes order and constancy in the mind. It is the chaos of thought which it informs—the multiplicity of perceptions and opinions which it reduces to their simplest and truest expression. Such expressions of thought accordingly have been appropriately denominated Theories ; as so many points of contemplation from which the mind takes in the truth of things—views things, as they are in the constitution of

nature, and not as isolated, irregular, and confused phenomena.

Science is constructed on the same principles, and answers precisely the same purposes, as are involved in the structure itself of language. The only difference is in the comparative excellence of the two instruments. Language is hastily and roughly constructed out of the first observations which the mind has made on things ; whilst Science has formed its observations by the rules and discipline of method, watching its own procedure, and carefully guarding against error. Both, however, analyse Nature : language recording by words the various phenomena which a superficial analysis has grouped together ; Science expressing in theories those combinations which its more patient and severe analysis has discovered. Thus when, in ordinary phraseology, we call any object material, or mental, we place it among a certain class of phenomena, considered so far alike as to admit a common name recording this likeness. But when the philosopher has resolved the fall of a stone and the revolution of a planet into the law of gravitation, he marks, by a theoretic expression, a reconducive observation, which the more exact

procedure of his mind has enabled him to make, of latent resemblances in nature. The object in view in the unconscious framers of language, as well as in the philosopher, is to fix and preserve evanescent phenomena in unchanging signs and forms of thought, for future knowledge and use. Only the terms of ordinary language are superficial in the knowledge which they convey, as subservient to the common purposes of life; the higher phraseology of Science founded on methodical observation, reveals the secrets of nature to the searcher after truth.

The work of Science, then, may be regarded as an improvement on that first rough method of observation, of which a language at its perfect state is the result and the evidence. By a continuation of the same process, accordingly, by which the fabric of science was first reared, a science becomes more and more a science. As its observations are more exact, as its analysis is more penetrating, so it discharges more fully the office which it has undertaken, and results in a more scientific knowledge.

Thus it is that every science commences with certain observations, to which, as to one subject, it directs the whole aim of its inquiry.

It assumes, as it were, a rough science of the matter in hand, and proceeds to work on this outline, drawing out more exact observations from it, and so on continually narrowing the field of inquiry, and concentrating its force on more and more inward points of view. When at length some ultimate facts are reached, facts which seem incapable of further analysis, a science at this point is regarded as complete. Here, therefore, it rests; until at least the happy genius of some fresh inquirer, or a ray of light cast on the subject by some fortunate accident, opens a glimpse of some more recondite truth.

What are those facts, then, which give occasion to the science of Moral Philosophy? In a word, we shall readily answer—Human Actions—all those phenomena which the conduct of man exhibits. The most superficial observation shows us, that the behaviour of human agents is quite distinct in its character from that of material objects in their operation on each other; and this is enough to constitute a separate science respecting this class of agents. Moral Philosophy, accordingly, is the science of Human Actions. It investigates the laws of Human Actions;

carefully collecting all the phenomena by which they are displayed, and reducing them to the order, the harmony, and the constancy of Theory.

When we come, however, to study Human Actions, and for the direction of all future inquiries to discriminate their phenomena from those of any other subject, what is the first observation that occurs to us? It is this, that actions are distinguished from all other objects, in being parts of the conduct of a being endued with capacities of good and evil, and perceptions of right and wrong,—with a sensitive, and a moral nature ; and that Actions, consequently, are the pursuit of that good and right, the avoidance of that evil and wrong, to which man is so sensitively alive. As the peculiar effects of Man, they are the effects of that peculiar nature which belongs to man. They are, therefore, essentially pursuits of ends, aims at good, efforts towards the attainment of some object either immediate or remote. They are the characteristic effects of a being, conscious that his life and happiness are put in his own power, and who displays in them, more or less perfectly, according to the state of the individual, his

endeavours to realize those results. The laws, therefore, of which Moral Philosophy is in quest, are the laws of Human Activity, —the theory of that unceasing spirit of pursuit which every human action displays,—the systematic view of all those various phenomena, by which the instinctive restlessness of our nature is evidenced.

The great principle, then, on which the whole of moral science proceeds, is, that man is an *'Αρχή'*^a—a Principle in himself—an author and originator of effects. This is assumed by the very nature of the inquiry, which is an investigation into the facts exemplifying this principle of Activity. It is an assumption in this branch of study exactly analogous to that of Natural Philosophy, that nature is in itself a principle of motion. Neither assumption, indeed, excludes the idea of a Supreme Being, by whose creative and sustaining energy the powers of a moral nature, as well as those of the material universe, obtain their proper force. To take, however, this consideration into our estimate, true and most important as it is, would be to sacrifice the independent character of either

^a Aristot. Eth. iii. 5, vi. 2.

class of investigations. It would be to mix up natural theology with subordinate sciences; to overlook proximate causes, the first and immediate concern of human inquiry, in a sudden transition to the great Primary Cause, in whose presence all philosophy terminates, and curiosity expires in adoration.

To call in question this fundamental assumption, is to deny the existence of any proper science of morals. It is to reduce the philosophy of man to a promiscuous level with that knowledge, which we obtain of effects in the world without us. Indeed, it is bringing into question the whole speculation concerning cause and effect. For we have no other reason for attributing the phenomena of nature to the agency of a cause,—no idea of such a relation as that of cause and effect,—but from the consciousness of a power within ourselves to produce external effects. We know, from what passes within ourselves, that this power exists—this relation of our will to our actions, as a principle of causation. It is an ultimate fact in the constitution of our minds, that the notion of a principle of causation is immediately suggested on our perceiving what passes within ourselves when we act. And it is by gene-

ralizing this fact that we ascribe a cause to external phenomena, so that every change observed in objects without us, is conceived necessarily to result from the agency of some force.^b

To deny, therefore, the fundamental principle of man's intrinsic Activity, would be to introduce an universal scepticism. As we could only speak then of phenomena, as conjoined in the way of antecedents and consequents, so respecting man in particular, it would be but idle to speak of the *motives* of his conduct: virtue and vice would not be principles of the heart, but the mere general names of similar modes of behaviour. The whole rule of virtue would rest on the observation, that a certain series of actions is found connected with certain consequences in fact. We should not see why one virtuous action naturally follows another. There would be nothing to shock our reason in the supposition, that the most vicious act might follow the most virtuous in the conduct of the same person.

As Moral Philosophy takes its rise on this assumption, so the whole business of it is to

^b See M. Cousin, *Hist. de la Philos. du XVIII^e. siècle.*
19 Leçon.—Paris, 1829.

collect and arrange observations on the principle. Not that any researches, however wide and profound, can ever throw any light on the principle of Human Activity, as it exists in itself. Its characteristics, and its manifestations, are all that it is permitted us to know respecting it, and all that a just moral philosophy will aspire to know. We can know no more of it in itself, than we know of the principle of life, of the nature of the soul, of the intellect, of space, or time, of any other nature, whose simple existence is, notwithstanding its intrinsic mystery, fully evident to our minds. As I have said, its characteristics and its manifestations are what moral philosophy leads us to study, what it promises to treat of, and draw forth for our information and improvement.

Now it is clear that we have a distinct conception of this intrinsic self-activity, independently of the particular actions by which it is exerted and manifested. Its reality is antecedently evident to our consciousness, which acquaints us with its existence, as fully as our outward observation discovers to us the existence of objects without us. We are inwardly sensible, at the moment when we will to do

any thing, that it is in our power *to will* either to do, or not to do it; that, whatever circumstances have either preceded or followed our determination, it is, in the strictest sense, competent to us *to will* to act in this way or in that way. And here resides the true power, the proper freedom of the Will in man. Circumstances may oblige us to take this course or that, when we come to execute our Will. There we encounter forces not under our own control. For instance, the will to move the palsied arm is no less a real act of volition, no less a plenary exertion of the intrinsic Activity of our nature, because the arm does not obey the Will, than if the motion had followed. For the defective organization is the impediment only to the *effect*: this cannot act on the primary mover, the Will itself, which still feels and asserts its own freedom, in spite of the obstructions to its positive efficiency. External circumstances are necessary conditions to its *development*, but cannot alter its intrinsic nature.

But though nothing is wanting of outward effect, to give us a distinct consciousness of the reality of the active power with which our nature is endued, yet, in order to philosophize concerning it, we must have recourse, as I

have said, to the phenomena by which it is manifested. But what are these phenomena but Actions; Moral Actions, that is; phenomena, which display man as he is a motive principle, an intrinsic agent, originating effects through his own spontaneous energy.

But why do I say Moral Actions particularly? For it might seem that actions, in the general sense, are evidences of the motive principle of human nature; that any effects whatever, produced by man,—as, for instance, works of art,—are among the phenomena to which our observation should be directed.

I except, then, all but moral actions from the class of phenomena which we are to investigate, with a view to ascertaining the laws of man's active nature, for this reason. In all our other exertions, the intellect bears the principal part, and our active nature the secondary. The works of art are manifestations of the intellectual principle; to which, indeed, the concurrence of the active powers is necessary, as a *condition*, but not as constituting an essential part of the production. But in moral actions, it is just the reverse. The moral action is, properly and solely, a manifestation of man as an active being. The

intellect is here the necessary condition for the development of the active power. For without a power of thought, and discernment, and deliberation, and judgment, it would be clearly impossible to act at all. The power to act would equally exist, but could never be exerted—could never show itself in any intelligible manner.

By moral actions, I designate all such as give indication of passions, dispositions, sentiments, manners, character. Now, in the phenomena which display these last, the fact presented to our notice is some mode or other in which the activity of our nature develops itself: they are various illustrations of human agency. Though by analysis we detect in them the operation also of intellectual principles,—as in the comparison of motives, the deliberation on them, the ultimate decision,—they are only incidentally illustrations of these, whilst they give a direct answer to the question; how man acts. Do we inquire how he knows and reasons, we must resort to other facts than these.

Neither, again, are the common acts of speaking, walking, and such like, to be consulted, when we would search into

man's active powers. These are phenomena belonging to our physical capacities. They show, indeed, power as well as intellect; but they are not *proper instances* of either. Their proper application is, to illustrate the connexion of soul and body—to give evidence of that wonderful mechanism by which a spiritual nature operates on a material one.

Without, however, further discussion of the differences which characterize man's moral energies in contrast with other functions of his active power, it is sufficient for our purpose to point out, that moral actions alone present a view of human activity in its unimpeded exercise. Hence the name of *Actions*, in the most popular sense, has been given to these: the popular acceptance of the term marking the class of phenomena to which the attention of the philosopher is peculiarly called, when he would investigate the nature of Human Activity. In the passions, the character, the manners, we see that in which the power of man resides—his will to do, or not to do—freely exercised. No co-operation from the physical world is here required—no bodily organization, as in the motion of the arm, is here called into play.

These phenomena are the simple modifications of the Will. The passions felt, the sentiments formed, the disposition, the manners, manifest to each person's consciousness that he is truly an ἀρχὴ in himself; they evidence both where the sphere of his power lies, and how far it extends. In studying these he finds that he has indeed a power given him by the Lord of all power and might, of which he could otherwise have had no conception. He perceives that he is placed in his own hands; that it is his high "prerogative to be, in a great degree, a creature of his own making;" that he can modify and transform himself, as a moral being, as he pleases; that what he *may become* depends almost solely on what he *may will*.

Nothing, in fact, appears strictly placed in our own power, but our virtue, and our happiness as its consequent, on the one hand—our vice, with its consequent misery, on the other. Virtue and Vice are essentially principles of the heart; existing only as they are put forth into being by the human agent. They have no dependence on external facts for their production. It is enough that the will is for one or for the other: the virtuous will is virtue, and the vicious will is vice.

External facts, indeed, are required to give evidence to others of the moral state of our own hearts :—not so, however, for ourselves. We are conscious of the internal act by which we will either right or wrong ; and that nothing can impede either the one or the other,—the will to do right, or the will to do wrong,—the virtuous or the vicious act accordingly,—but a change of Will. The external moral act, on the contrary, is not always in our power. We may do good or do evil, without any real command over the act. The timid may display an act of courage, or the courageous an act of timidity, without any real inclination towards the actions performed. The mere force of passion, what I may call the organic part of our mental constitution, may overpower the moral agent, may induce him to act otherwise than he *would*. Accidental circumstances may favour a particular course of conduct or thwart it. Benevolence may want the opportunity to be kind in deed ; and an unamiable heart may overflow with streams of bounty. We are not then conscious of any exertion of our own power to do or not to do from the *actual results* in our conduct. It is always with reference to what we *would* do, or *would not*

do, that we impute to our own agency the action done, even when it is such as is cognizable only at the tribunal of our own conscience.^c

These primary facts regarding the principle of Human Activity indicate to the philosopher the object which he is to pursue in the investigations of moral truth. In these inquiries, more than in any, is exemplified the maxim of the sage ; “ that human knowledge and power are coincident.” We are engaged in exploring man’s proper dominions,—the region within which man holds sway with a supremacy, delegated indeed from the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, but absolute. The moral philosopher searches out that land in its length and breadth : he travels into every corner of it, collects its statistics, discovers the laws by which its government is administered. Moral power, like all other power,

^c See Butler on “ The Nature of Virtue,”—“ Acting, conduct, behaviour, abstracted from all regard to what is, in fact and event, the consequence of it, is itself the natural object of the moral discernment,” &c.—P. 434. Aristotle did not sufficiently attend to the *internal* action, when he denied the moral virtues to the gods because they could have no occasion for the outward exercise of them.—Ethic. X. c. 8.

is only to be established by a principle of obedience, by obeying its own laws : as nature, in general, so the moral world, *parendo vincitur*. All our studies accordingly are subordinate to this great business—the knowledge of the principles by which man's activity develops itself ; that by conforming to these we may obtain the mastery of ourselves. Thus is Moral Philosophy preeminently a science of Human Duty. To find out the laws by which a moral being is bound, is to know where his strength lies ; to obey those laws, is to realize it in fact. All other sciences only indirectly increase man's power : they enlarge the sphere of his operation, multiply his relations to external objects, add new conquests to his natural kingdom. Moral Philosophy strengthens and augments that power in itself. At the same time it enables man to avail himself more fully of the acquisitions made by the other sciences, to apply these acquisitions to the elevation of the mind, the reformation of the heart, and the improvement of social life.

It is then to internal actions that the eye of the moral philosopher directs its view. External facts present to him, in common with the

physical philosopher, a difficulty arising from their complexity,—from their involving circumstances unessential to the production of the effects, and demanding, therefore, an acute and severe analysis, in order to their successful investigation. But he has this difficulty over and above the physical philosopher, that the facts which properly concern his inquiries are internal. Actions, as they are outward events, give no distinct indication of the principles of which he is in search. In observing therefore the actions of men as they appear on the face of the world, he must practise a strict caution and reserve. He must reject what he sees and hears around him as any decisive evidence of the recondite truth which is his object. Of him, indeed, it may be said, with truth,—

*Δεῖ τοι βαθείας φροντίδος σωτηρίου,
δίκην κολυμβητῆρος, ἐς βυθὸν μολεῖν
δεδορκὸς ὄμμα, μηδ' ἄγαν δινώμενον.*^d

The laws of the will are what he is seeking after, and these, he must be ever aware, are not to be found but in the sanctuary itself of the human heart, nor even there (more than

^d Æschyl. Supp. 420.

any other truths), without an exact scrutiny and rejection of irrelevant phenomena.

When, for instance, some philosophers have concluded, from the manifestation of man's active powers in childhood or in the savage state, that virtue was not the natural instinctive law of the human will, might we not say at once that they had philosophized superficially on the subject; that they had mistaken for phenomena of the Human Will mere external complex facts; that they had made no allowance for modifications and counteractions arising from circumstances, and called simple events, accidental combinations of appearances, the laws of nature?

That the laws of man's active powers are not to be sought in the promiscuous survey of human actions, was implied in that theory of ancient philosophy, that the Will is invariably towards good. It is contended by Plato, that, so far from the vicious man being master of his own actions, and doing whatever he wills, the contrary is the case. The vicious man, says Socrates, does "what seems" good to him, *ἃ δοκεῖ*, but not what "he wills," *ἃ βούλεται*.^e His actions do not

^e Plato, Gorgias.

exhibit him as a being endued with active power, but only as he is subject to be acted on by circumstances. His behaviour is the type of his feelings or opinions, not of his will. So far, indeed, Socrates was right in his view. He saw that man did not enjoy the proper power of his nature, when he indulged every wayward fancy, and conformed his conduct to each appearance of good. Socrates was only wrong when he carried this theory too far, and pronounced that all indulgence of the passions, all vice, is involuntary. Assuredly, vice is not the true-born offspring of man's gifted power of action, but it does not follow therefore that vice is involuntary. The will by which we act is free (as I have before pointed out) even at the moment when it does not put forth its full power, when it gives way to passions which it might control; when, like the strong man, it submits to be bound and shorn of its strength. The fact of its giving way only evidences its natural weakness, its need of support, and cultivation, and improvement. The case does not prove the absence of active power, but the concomitance of other circumstances varying the result. But Plato wished to give the *aristeia* to philosophy. That which dispels igno-

rance, removes the delusions of false opinions, corrects wrong measures of things, and presents objects as they are to the spiritualized eye of intellect, must be accordingly the true antidote of vice. Philosophy, making the evil that “seemed” good to the vicious man, no longer to seem so, the will obtains its lawful power, and realizes the good to which it is naturally directed,—which it seeks all along, but, from ignorance, cannot attain.

But if the Will, the active power of man, is in itself weak and inadequate to its own functions, it must be the part of sound philosophy to strengthen that power in itself, not indirectly through the intellect, but by immediate address to itself. The laws of its intrinsic operation must be ascertained, and these applied as a discipline of improvement. The object of Moral Philosophy being “not knowledge but action,” its whole stress must be on what tends to increase the power of action,—to invest this power with the full prerogatives of that authority which the Lord of all power has destined it to receive.

Such is the high mission of Moral Philosophy. Such is the vast aim of all its subordinate and instrumental labours.

But in working out this object, does it pretend to dispense with the service of Religion? Does it aspire alone to accomplish the regeneration of the Human Will, to reinstate man in his natural dominion, to shed on him the lustre of the awful image in which he was originally formed?—No: The very nature of the object proposed will show that it aims not to realize, by its single-handed efforts, so glorious an enterprize. A true moral philosophy will feel the imperfection of the instruments with which it works. The study of the human Will,—a knowledge of the various forms under which the Activity of man develops itself,—will effectually preclude all idle expectation of unattainable results. Its machinery, indeed, will be perfect as far as it reaches: it will infallibly do its work, if it be given free play. It will invigorate the active powers of man: it will facilitate their operation: it will both guide them into the proper course, and exalt them to efforts of which they were before incapable. But it will not overlook the fact, that there is something mysterious and inexplicable by human speculation in that principle of activity which it investigates. It will see that it is not in the heart which takes counsel, or in the hand which

executes, that the strength of the agent lies; that the battle is not for the strong, or the race for the swift; but that with all, at the very moment when the victory seems to be won, it is given; and that the pious assertion of one, whose moral strength was perhaps never surpassed, is literally true—"When I am weak, then am I strong."

For there is a real enthusiasm of the will, as there is a real enthusiasm of the intellect. There are moments when we apprehend truths, as it were, by an instinctive perception,—when we have a lively irresistible conviction presented to our minds, independently of any reasons for its support,—when our pure reason in fact is, in itself, the evidence to us of the principles whose truth we conceive. This seems to be admitted by Aristotle himself, when he says, that "even in the bad there is some natural good, *κρείττον ἢ καθ' αὐτὰ*, superior to what they are in themselves, which aims at its own good;"^f and still more, in another passage (if the work in which it occurs be really his), which speaks of perceptions "without reason, and higher than reason;" and of persons who are wise "by a happy fortune," by a presence of mind and

^f Ethic. X. c. 2.

quickness of perception beyond the calculation of reasoning.^g The observation applies particularly to the active powers. There are, in this department of our nature, striking cases of an instantaneous perception of the right and wrong in conduct,—when there is not only an abstract knowledge of what ought to be done, but a ready and unaccountable power of doing it,—when the happiness of virtue suddenly fills the heart with ineffable joy,—and the moral strength wonders at the miracles of its own achievement. Here man feels a principle of duty superior to his rules of conduct, and working the same end with those rules, only carrying him, however, more rapidly to it; as in the inspirations of the intellect, truths of the highest reason are apprehended with an intuitiveness which outstrips the processes of reason.^h There may be

^g Κινεῖ γὰρ πως πάντα τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν θεῖον, κ.τ.λ.—*Ethic. ad Eudem.* VII. c. 14. The work has been attributed to Theophrastus, and to Eudemus of Rhodes. The text of the passage referred to is extremely corrupt: but the general sense of it is sufficiently clear.

^h This, probably, is the solution of the demon of Socrates. The instinctive piety of his mind animated and directed his conduct in a way that he could not account for by dint of reasoning, and therefore explained to himself as an express Divine interference.—See *Phædrus*, pp. 311, 312.

a false enthusiasm of the heart as of the intellect: such are the fancied experiences which result in the fervours and ecstasies of mysticism. Still there is a basis of truth on which such perversions have been built. The fact is extremely difficult to be verified, as it appeals solely to each person's consciousness; it is difficult also to state it in an unobjectionable form. But it cannot, I think, be rejected from among the real phenomena of the mind.ⁱ

Moral Philosophy, accordingly, so far from excluding the operation of Religion on the heart, will especially respect Religion among its means of exalting and improving the power of man. By observing that even in the dominion of the will, after the utmost investigation of the laws of action, there remains the evidence of a force whose operation cannot be explained by these laws, it will take care to preserve in its system, and cherish, that instinct of our nature which sends us for help and strength out of ourselves. It will breathe along with the devout aspirations of faith, and yield itself up to the holy violence of prayer.

Certainly no true philosophy would omit

ⁱ See the observations of M. Guizot, *Hist. de la Civiliz. en France*, Leçon 5. Paris, 1829. Also, M. Cousin, *Hist. de la Philos. du XVIII^e. siècle*. 4^e Leçon.

the cultivation of those sentiments by which the heart of man is impelled towards God and a world beyond the present view. These sentiments are as much a development of man's active powers, as any others; as any that manifest themselves in the phenomena of social life. These, therefore, strictly fall under the operation of those laws of the human will which it is the object of this branch of philosophy to discover. Any philosophy which neglected the consideration of them, must be so far maimed and imperfect.

But, after all that has been accomplished by the most extensive research, there will still remain to be allowed for, those phenomena in which Human Activity displays a power more than its own, and (to speak strictly) not its own. Here, then, is the proper exclusive ground of Religion. Religion sums up all its practical energy in the one quality of Resignation. It takes by the hand those feelings of the heart which look heavenward. Its divine ambition is, to loosen the ties which bind us to the present narrow scene of earthly duties, and to fix our thoughts and desires on the invisible spiritual world. Our Lord very graphically and very truly describes its character, when he said, " If a man forsake not father

and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”^k As Religion, such is its nature: it is essentially abnegation of self, of present endearments, of the world around us, of our own power. It is, as I have said (using the thought and expression of Bishop Butler¹), Resignation,—a surrender of ourselves to interests and influences out of our own dominion and control. It works on the heart by faith, hope, love, patience; means which, in themselves, divert us from confidence in our own activity, and so far check that activity. That Religion, *in itself alone*, tends to this extreme, is evidenced in the lives of devotees, who have sought an entire abstractedness from society, and endeavoured to realize its sublime influence in their hearts, by stilling every thought into passiveness and repose. We are not to blame such persons for being too religious, for perverting and misrepresenting Religion by excess. Their fault is, that they suffer their minds to

^k Luke xiv. 26.

¹ “Resignation to the will of God is the whole of piety,” &c.—*Butler’s Sermon upon the Love of God*, p. 244. ed. 1820.

“Religion consists in submission and resignation to the Divine will.”—*Sermon upon the Ignorance of Man*, p. 268.

imbibe it *exclusively*; that they leave no room for their own nature to develop itself; converting what was given for their comfort and encouragement into a sublime luxury and a holy pastime. The religious instincts of the heart were surely never meant to absorb the whole man, according to the designs of Him who implanted also both private and social affections in our nature. The largeness of his provision for human good is kept back by those, who draw lavishly on one fountain of blessing, and seal up the rest. The moralist, therefore, does not say to the religionist, "Give less to God;" but, "in giving to God, think also of what is due to the actual condition of human life; consider well the requisitions of that active nature which is the especial mirror of the Divine Will, the derivative energy of the Divine Power; do all to the glory of God, but do *all*; leave no part of the Divine law and order unsatisfied."

Thus Religion and Morality are as two forces, sustaining the equilibrium of our nature. If either existed without the other, we should be carried away into a devious course. The conviction of a Supreme, all-pervading Being, who is the very Energy by which we act,

and the Life by which we live, is a thought of overwhelming interest, which steeps in self-forgetfulness all the faculties of the soul. The words of Job, "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace," declare this tendency of the simple religious spirit. The same is seen in those affectionate expressions of the Psalmist, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.—Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee:" and in many other like passages of Scripture. All thoughtful persons have probably experienced this feeling at some moment of their lives. In the day of affliction, for example, when the world recedes from our view, and all its enjoyments and interests dwindle into nothingness, the realities of Religion present themselves with an intensity of which we had before no conception. We would then take the wings of the dove, and flee away, to indulge the musings of the heart in loneliness and inaction. The gospel has not lost sight of this fact of our nature. While its great and peculiar office is, to render us dead to the world that we may live to Christ;

it represses the frenzies of fanatical excitement. It throughout subdues and chastens the mysticism to which its invisible realities might carry the susceptible mind, both by express maxims of duty, full of sobriety and prudence, and by its domestic picture of the Redeemer, as one mixing in affable converse with men, and drawing us to him with cords of humanity no less than by the life-blood flowing from his cross.

We shall find, at the same time, that Religion abstains entirely from the *Science* of Morality. Its only concern is, that morality should exist *in fact*—should be exemplified *personally* in all religious men. It leaves the field of Science open to the cultivation of the moralist, on whose exertions it reckons to explain the grounds of its precepts, their obligation, connexion, and extent.

On the other hand, Moral Philosophy leans on the aid of religion for accomplishing its mission of human reformation. It piles up the wood for the sacrifice, and slays the victims, and scatters the incense; but it expects the fire to descend from heaven, and kindle the offering into flames. Its system is perfect and beautiful; but its working cannot be ensured. The objects which it proposes are

noble; but it reaches not the disease of the soul, and cannot transform us by the renewing of the mind to the Divine image. This is readily confessed. Still it stands firmly and securely on its own theories, without the aid which it practically invokes from Religion.^m

Ecclesiastical history abundantly informs us to what extravagances an exclusive religious principle has carried its votaries; in some instances even, not only to a contempt of systems of Ethics, but to a flagitious denial of the most common and confessed obligations of Virtue. Such is the tendency of the stern devotedness of Islamism. In that creed, religious activity does not second, but supersede and annul, the proper activity of human nature. All moral power is extinguished when the blood, shed in the battles of a pretended Faith, can sanctify the licentious life. A sentiment of the Divine Predestination, uncontrolled by moral views, degenerates into a mere *ἄργος λόγος*, a doctrine of absolute indifference. In like manner, a belief of our Justification by faith, separated from natural

^m For further observation on the manner in which Revelation enlarges our stock of moral truth, I must refer to my sixth Bampton Lecture, "On the Moral Philosophy of the Schools."

convictions of duty, rushes into the fearful extreme of antinomianism. When, however, the neglect of moral truth simply results in the amiable enthusiasm of Quietism, it is enough to show that something more is wanting than mere religious zeal for the right conduct of life. We may extend, indeed, to the feelings the observation which Bacon has so aptly made concerning the intellect; that they require “not feathers, but rather lead and weights.”ⁿ Religion gives them “feathers;” from Philosophy they receive “the lead and the weights.” Religion would at once bear us aloft to the Divine Presence, and fulfil all the desires of the heart in the immediate fruition of the Chief Good; Philosophy reminds us that we are on earth, that we gravitate to the soil beneath our feet; and that there is no reaching the sublime eminence to which our desires ultimately tend, without travelling along the beaten road, step by step, girding up the loins, and taking heed to our ways.

Observe, then, how the two principles combined work the good of man. As Christians, we look to God as our beginning and our end. He is our first mover in whatever we do that is good. The beauty, and the honour, and

ⁿ Nov. Org. I. 104.

the happiness of our virtue, are of him creating us in Jesus Christ unto good works, and sanctifying us by the inspiration of his Spirit. In the thoughts, and feelings, and actions, connected with these holy sentiments, we find rest to our souls, and peace, and comfort, and joy, and animation. But this is not all the development of man. There is a spirit of restlessness in our nature. We have springs of action, an elasticity within us, which is constantly pushing itself outward, and urging us to take part in the scenes among which we live. Whilst, therefore, on the one hand, we live as not of the world, whilst we spiritualize and immortalize our nature to the utmost,—we must also humanize it; we must provide for the duties belonging to the heirs of flesh and blood. Nor is this last part to be degraded and slighted, because it is not the higher function. Nor, again, is the part of Religion to be held less necessary and indispensable for human life, because it does not bear immediately and palpably on the positive needs of our present material condition in the world. A just comprehensive view will embrace both systems, maintaining their relative importance and mutual dependence.

LECTURE IV.

AFTER that we have determined to what class of facts Moral Philosophy directs our attention; and we have seen that it is the laws of Human Activity we are concerned in investigating;—the next inquiry in order seems to be, by what method these laws are to be investigated; whether there is any thing peculiar in the subject here before us—any thing that demands a mode of inquiry different from that of science in general.

I have already laid it down, as the utmost ambition of Science, to reduce the phenomena which it studies to their most simple and general expression, so that the mind may clearly and steadily contemplate the order and constancy of nature; may see the truth as it is in nature, without delusion or doubt. Under this general description, I include, of course, Moral Philosophy. It cannot, more than any other science, conduct us into the

recesses of truth further than the phenomena on which it is engaged, lead it by the hand. Still, when we consider that it is about ourselves, about our own feelings and actions, that this kind of knowledge professes to enlighten us; and as we have consequently a double field of observation presented us,—not only the world without us, but our own hearts,—not only our experience of others, but our consciousness of ourselves,—it might seem as if, at least, there were an opening here for obtaining information beyond what is attainable in other branches of Science. Though the same method of analysis must be pursued both in Morals and in Physics, as being the only method of discovery, yet the opportunity presented of inquiring the truth of ourselves, and arguing from it to what we observe around us, might reasonably suggest to us, that a principle of analysis may be applicable here, which could not be so properly employed in researches of a different kind.

So far, then, as Moral Science comes under the general head of Philosophy, I do not purpose offering to you any observations on the mode of analysis to be pursued in its investigations. To do this would be, in fact, to deduce to you the rules of investi-

gation as they have been originally set forth in the “*Novum Organum*” of Bacon, or rather as they have since been drawn out, with more precision, in the school of modern Physics, by disciples worthy of such a master. It is enough for me to give you a general reference to such works.^a I should add that the method of investigation derived from the “*Novum Organum*,” applies not more strictly to Physics than it does to Morals, even according to the intention of its great author in proposing it;^b and that no sound moral philosophy can be obtained, except by pursuing, whether consciously or unconsciously, the analysis of which you have there the outlines given you. The rules there prescribed must be followed, whether we know them or not in words, so far as they state the regular procedure of the mind in the work of investigation.

Not to dwell, therefore, on what is common to Moral Philosophy with other branches of science in the mode of analysis, let us consider whether there is not something peculiar

^a See particularly Herschel’s *Prelim. Disc. on the Study of Nat. Philos.* published in the *Cabinet Encyclop.* 1832.

^b Tam enim historiam et tabulas inveniendi conficimus de ira, metu, et verecundia, et similibus; ac etiam de exemplis rerum civilium, &c.—*Nov. Org.* I. 127.

to it in regard to its method of investigation.

I conceive, then, that the analysis employed in Moral Philosophy has a peculiarity in this respect, that it employs the speculation into *Final Causes*, as its own proper domain. I hasten to explain what I mean by this assertion, and justify my appropriation of this method to our province.

Ancient Philosophy being more a logical than a scientific investigation of Nature, instead of simply seeking to analyse observed facts, sought rather to give a *reason* to the mind for the existence of things, under whatever point of view they might be contemplated. Upon this principle was devised the ancient theory of Causation, or, to speak of it more accurately, their theory of *Reasons*, αἰτίαι, which was distributed into these four heads: 1. The material; 2. The formal; 3. The efficient; 4. The final. For, in accounting for the existence of any thing, we may ask the following questions:—1st. Out of what it originated? 2dly. What constitutes it as it is in itself? 3dly. What produced it? 4thly. For what end is it?—The replies to these

questions seem to involve the whole reason of a thing; its past history, its present state, the transition to that state, its destination. Such was at once the theory of causation, and the method of analysis adopted by the ancients in their philosophical investigations. In truth, however, not employing these principles so much for analysing, as for reasoning about nature, they applied them only in a general superficial manner; not solicitous to unfold them, and aid their inquiries by the method involved in them. Had they done so, indeed, they might have anticipated the discoveries of Bacon, and not have wandered, as they did, into a mere verbal science of physics.

But the part of the theory to which I must call your attention more particularly is the statement of the Final Cause—the reason of an object drawn from a view of its end, from its reference to something else; or, in one word, from its *tendency*. The expression, Final Cause, is, no doubt, sufficiently familiar to you all. It is one of the technical terms of Philosophy, which we have received and retain among the standing monuments of the age of Scholasticism, and of its long dominion over the literature of Europe. And yet,

perhaps, it is seldom understood in the sense which it was originally intended to convey. Indeed, the expression itself involves a confusion of ideas: since our ordinary notion of a cause, as *an antecedent* to an effect, repels the connexion of a cause with the notion of *an end*. Hence Dugald Stewart has proposed substituting the term Ends, or Uses, as a more definite nomenclature of the principle.^c Taking, however, the term as we find it, let us examine in what sense the principle, at least, denoted by it appears to have been understood by the ancients. For this purpose, we cannot resort to better authority than that of Aristotle himself.

If, then, we are to judge from the explanations of the principle given by Aristotle, the notion of a Final Cause, as originally conceived, did not necessarily imply Design. The theological sense, to which it is now commonly restricted, has been derived from the place assigned to it in the scholastic philosophy: though, indeed, the principle had been long before beautifully applied by Socrates and by the Stoics, to establish the truth of a

^c Philosophy of the Human Mind, ch. iv. sect. 6. p. 496. vol. ii. ed. 1816.

Divine Providence. Whenever, indeed, we observe the adjustment of means to an end, we seem irresistibly impelled to conclude that the whole is the effect of Design. The present acceptation, therefore, of the doctrine of Final Causes, is undoubtedly a natural one. Still it is not a necessary construction of the doctrine. With Aristotle, accordingly, it is simply an inquiry into Tendencies,—an investigation of any object or phenomenon, from considering the *ἐνεκά του*, the reason of it in something else which follows it, and to which it naturally leads.

The instances, indeed, which Aristotle adduces as illustrations of Final Causes, are instances precisely of the same kind as those to which Natural Theology usually appeals; in which there appear to be thoughtful adaptations of distinct means to distinct ends, a preparation made for certain effects, a proceeding in method and order. He refers to the instincts of the lower animals as producing effects without search or deliberation. Of these instances he observes, that they “give occasion to the question, whether it is by intelligence, or by what else, that spiders work, and ants, and the like?” “As we proceed further,” he subjoins, “there appears

even in plants the production of what is expedient to the end, as the leaves for shelter to the fruit :” whence he concludes that, “ if it is both by nature, and for an end, that the swallow makes its nest, and the spider its web, and plants have their leaves for the fruits, and their roots not upwards, but downwards for nourishment, it is plain that there is such a cause (a final cause) in what is produced and exists by nature.”

If we consider, however, with what purpose he introduces these instances, we shall find that it is not to bring evidence of an Almighty Designer of this admirable constitution of things, but to refute those who resolved the course of nature into fortuitous coincidences. The opinion had been advocated by some early philosophers, that nature had commenced her operations with vague and capricious combinations, which, from their very imperfection, soon fell to ruin ; but that when, after having thus “ tried her ’prentice hand,” and often failed, at length a happy congeries of accidents was struck out, her work containing in it all that was necessary for its holding together, stood fast : and thus was constituted the existing form of things. In controverting this theory, Aristotle contends that

we must admit a regular subordination of means and ends in nature ; since what takes place, constantly or usually, is never assigned to Chance, but only what happens unexpectedly ; and that, even in unexpected events, there is often a connexion of means and ends, if we could only discern it. We may, for example, as he says, impute to Chance the occurrence of rain under the dog-star, or of heat in winter ; but not those events when they happen in season. His theory, therefore, of Final Causes is immediately opposed to a doctrine of Chance, or spontaneous coincidence ; and must be regarded as the denial of that, rather than as a positive assertion of Design. He expressly distinguishes, indeed, between Thought and Nature. He ascribes to Nature the same working, in order to ends, which is commonly regarded as the attribute of Thought alone. He insists that there is no reason to suppose deliberation necessary in these workings of Nature ; since it is “ as if the art of ship-building were in the timber, or just as if a person should act as his own physician.” The work, that is, he would have us suppose, is unthinkingly performed, as an art executes its work by rules previously ascertained, and not by consulting about the

means at the moment of operation.^d That such is the notion of Final Causes, as understood by its most scientific interpreter, may be further seen in the theism in which it resulted. The Divinity of Aristotle's system is the pure Energy of Goodness, at once the first mover, and ultimate end of pursuit, in all things. All the processes of nature, accordingly, are *for the sake of* this great object ; all means in their subordination to ends are *tendencies to this* sovereign good.

Now, though I would not desire to separate inferences of Design from the speculation into Final Causes, I think it necessary to keep the employment of it as a principle of investigation distinct from these inferences. Looking simply to the fact of adjustments and tendencies existing in nature,—we learn, that it is not enough to consider things merely in themselves, but that they must be studied as parts of a system, or constitution ; and that our estimate of them must be taken from that to which they are related, and to which they are tending.

^d Aristot. *Natur. Auscult.* III. c. 3—9. pp. 330—339. Du Val. These interesting chapters are well worth a diligent study. See also *Analyt. Post.* II. c. 10.

Thus, without taking in the notion of a benevolent Designer and Governor of the world, we might reason concerning Virtue in two ways. Either we might view it as it actually appears on the face of things; where it is often disappointed and obscured; but where we may still detect its superiority in the competition with vice, and its consequent obligation on our conduct. Or we may extend our survey beyond the effects actually realized, and judge of the nature of Virtue from its relation to the system with which it is connected. We should consider, in this case, what it would be, if permitted by the world to reach the point towards which its course is shaped, to put forth all its energies, and fulfil its destination. The obligation of Virtue would then be founded on the ascendancy which it *ought* to obtain. And it is drawn, you may perceive, from a final cause—from that to which Virtue is tending; not from what it actually is at the present moment. In the former mode of arguing, we confine our attention entirely to the present view of it.

Such is the method followed by Butler, in evidencing the moral Government of God. In his ultimate application, indeed, of the great Truth, he assumes the facts which he

has advanced as evidences of a moral Designer ; but his reasoning from the facts to the law of virtue is independent of this application. For he argues that, though it may appear, on the whole, that a sanction is given to Virtue in the course of the world, beyond what Vice obtains, and, so far, the law of Virtue is actually the law of the world ; yet the truth of the case is not fully set forth in this account of the matter. He shows, accordingly, that allowances must be made for impediments in the actual course of things ; that we must not regard the law of virtue as it is realized in *effect*, but in its *tendency*,—in the form in which it would display itself, if it could obtain a full development, and work out what it has begun. To illustrate this, accordingly, he brings before us a Platonic example of a perfect commonwealth, in which the law of Virtue is conceived to be the law of the state, and where the dominion of right is established without control or limit. It is evident, he says, that a state so constituted would gradually attract around it the people of one country after another, by respect for its justice, and by its example ; until at length it became an universal empire. “ And though, indeed, our knowledge of human nature,” he adds, “ and

the whole history of mankind, show the impossibility, without some miraculous interposition, that a number of men, here on earth, should unite in one society or government, in the fear of God and universal practice of virtue; and that such a government should continue so united for a succession of ages; yet, admitting or supposing this, the effect would be as now drawn out.”^c The instance itself is an assumed one; there is no necessity, in order to its justness and force, that we should be able to point to its positive existence. It is enough that such a case is easily conceivable. For it introduces no theory of the nature of Virtue. It only removes the mists which obstruct our clear discernment of the truth. It only presents an observed fact in a larger field of view; exempt from circumstances with which it has no proper connexion, and proportioned to the dimensions of that larger scheme of Providence to which it ultimately refers.

Or, again; the nature of a Final Cause may be illustrated by that portion of Aristotle’s *Ethics*, which shows that Virtue consists in a moderation or equilibrium of the

^c Butler’s *Anal.* c. 3. p. 95.

affections. The philosopher, it will be observed, has not confined his attention to each active principle, as a separate ingredient of our nature ; but has drawn out the virtues to our view, as they are held in check by their coexistence in each individual man, or their tendency as parts of a constitution to the perfection of that constitution. Read over that very interesting portion of his work ;^f and observe how careful he is not to allow you to suppose, that any one principle of your nature may be cultivated, as it stands alone, however good in itself ; pointing out to you how each virtue takes its very excellence from its place in a balanced system ; at one moment repressed as soon as it appears to be rushing into predominance and exclusiveness ; at another moment encouraged and spirited forward, when it seems not sufficiently to assert itself. This is what he means by saying, that in morals there must neither be excess nor defect, but only what ought to be.^g For this standard of what ought to be, is no particular rule of propriety, but a general

^f *Ethic. Nic.* from book ii. c. 6, omitting first five chapters of book iii. to the end of Book iv.

^g Ὡς τὰς μὲν ἐλλείπειν, τὰς δ' ὑπερβάλλειν τοῦ ὀρθοῦ.—*Ethic. Nic.* II. c. 6. Πρὸς ἡμᾶς δὲ, ὃ μήτε πλεονάζει μήτε ἐλλείπει τοῦ ὀρθοῦ.

reference (varying in its application individually,) of the active principles to their final causes; that is, as I have said, their mutual adjustment and subordination, as parts of a perfect constitution. With him, indeed, the theory is a description of the soul “energizing,” or exerting itself, so as to fulfil the destination of nature; nature, as it were, expanding itself, and realizing the tendencies to good with which it is instinctively fraught. But this is the point of connexion of his ethics with the larger system of his physics. It is enough for our purpose here to observe how the doctrine of Final Causes is illustrated, as a method of moral inquiry, in his general outline of the character of Virtue.

In illustration of the same point, observe further, how Aristotle applies the character of the perfectly good man as his standard of ethical rules. He contemplates man at his best estate; not as he is distinguished only from the lower animals, but as man excels among men, when the reason masters the passions, and self-denial ceases in the perfect love of virtue. This is precisely to study the principles of morality in their final cause; in the consummation, that is, to which they tend by their nature. The argument admits that

the world, *as it is*, does not exhibit the laws of virtue in full operation. It allows the force of worldly circumstances to depress and obscure the character of virtue. The philosopher, accordingly, desires us to contemplate virtue in cases favourable to its exhibition, in what he calls "a perfect life;" where there is an adequate duration of life for the acquisition of moral experience, and enough of worldly advantages to give opportunity for virtuous actions. And so, on the other hand, to depict the full deformity of vice, he takes his colouring not from what vice commonly is in fact, but from the extreme form which it assumes of the hardened and reprobate heart, if it be permitted to run its full career of iniquity, and reach the point to which it tends. Shall we say that all this is mere theory; that these views of the philosopher do not characterise virtue and vice, as they really are? So far from this, a mature consideration of the nature of all moral inquiry will produce in us the conviction, that there is no other right method of investigating such truths; the real fact concerning them being, not what they appear separately taken, and as floating on the surface of the world, but what they *ought* to be, and *would be*, if left to work themselves out freely.

The great Stoical principle which inculcates “following nature,” is a similar exemplification of arguing from Final Causes.^h We should greatly pervert this doctrine, as Butler shows,ⁱ if we imagined that it sanctions the following each passion indifferently as it arises, or as it exceeds in strength. The truth of it results from a collective view of all the several passions; in seeing what each has to do in conjunction with the rest, and how all conspire to form a whole; in giving authority to what bears the character of authority, and exacting obedience of what is evidently formed to obey.

Would you study, indeed, the method pursued by Aristotle, and the Stoics, in drawing the character of Virtue, in a work in our own language; I cannot send you to a more faithful description of it than is to be found in Butler’s Preface to his Sermons, and his Three Discourses on Human Nature. You have there the truth unfolded to you, that Nature is a

^h Sed nos cum dicimus, natura constare, administrarique mundum; non ita dicimus, ut glebam aut fragmentum lapidis, aut aliquid ejusmodi, nulla cohærendi natura; sed ut arborem, ut animal, in quibus nulla temeritas, sed ordo apparet, et artis quædam similitudo.—*Cicero de Nat. Deor.* II. c. 32.

ⁱ Preface to Sermons, and Sermon II. on Human Nature.

law to man: and the explanation of this principle, you will find, is nothing more than an application of the method of Final Causes to moral inquiry. The distinction which he states between the senses in which the term Nature is understood, demands your especial notice. "First," he says, "by Nature is often meant no more than some principle in man, without regard either to the kind or degree of it. Thus the passion of anger, and the affection of parents to their children, would be called equally *natural*."... Secondly, "Nature is frequently spoken of as consisting in those passions, which are strongest, and most influence the actions; which being vicious ones, mankind is in this sense naturally vicious, or vicious by nature." Thirdly, he proceeds to show, there is a still higher sense of the term according to which the Apostle describes the Gentiles as doing "by Nature the things contained in the law." It is in the expansion of this last sense of the term that he obtains all his moral views: for it leads us, as he points out, to take a survey of the "various appetites, passions, affections," combined with "the principle of reflection or conscience," so as to assign each its proper place and function in the human economy.

Modern philosophers, accordingly, have pressed the doctrine of Final Causes too far when interpreting it exclusively in the theological sense, they have objected to the use of it in physical inquiries. It is injurious only when employed to trace natural operations by a supposition of certain designs or intentions in nature. But to a certain extent it is fairly applicable even in Physics. Evidently, indeed, in studying the structure of the human body, we reason from a cause of this kind. The formation, for instance, of any part of the body is judged of, not as it appears when detached from the system to which it belongs, but from its relation to other parts and to the whole. Nor, again, do we look to deformed specimens, but to such as have reached their full growth and perfection, where the end of their structure appears to be answered. The combined bearing of the whole is had in view. A standard of perfection is present before the eye. But this is evidently reasoning from a final cause.

But though the speculation into Final Causes, when thus understood, and cautiously applied, is applicable to physical as well as moral inquiries, and perhaps has not been

duly estimated in its relation to physical truth, owing to the misconstruction of Bacon's remonstrances against the abuse of it ;—in Morals, it is not only useful, but indispensable to the right prosecution of the study.^k And it is on this account that I have called your attention to it in this Lecture, as the method which properly belongs to the moral philosopher, not only as aiding him in the investigation of his phenomena, but as that without which they cannot be successfully investigated at all. For it is of the very essence of moral principles to be estimated by their relations and tendencies; or, in other words, by their final causes.

For how is any internal principle of our nature to be inquired into at all, unless we bring it first in connexion with its object? Consider, for instance, the feeling of Resentment. How can any thing be known about it without an examination of the object of the feeling? Suppose we have ascertained that the object of it is, injustice, real or apparent ;

^k Tum vero ad ulteriora tendens, ad proximiora recidit, videlicet ad causas finales; quæ sunt plane ex natura hominis, potius quam universi.—*Bacon. Nov. Org.* I. 48. On the effect of Bacon's statements of the doctrine of Final Causes, see the chapter of Dugald Stewart's *Phil. of Hum. Mind*, already referred to.

we have made some step in the inquiry. What is this, however, but a primary fact concerning this feeling, discovered by a consideration of its immediate final cause—the object in order to which it exists? But the question then arises from this fact, viewed as a part of our nature, whether it has any relation to a further object; and then, again, whether this relation has any subserviency to the whole good of man, the general end of the whole constitution of our nature. Thus we should commence exploring the nature of Resentment, by viewing it in reference to Injustice: resentment against injustice would be accounted for by its reference to the prevention of injustice: and resentment against injustice connected with the prevention of injustice, would be explained by its reference to the happiness of the individual and of society.¹ So it holds of other feelings. “Allowing the inward feeling, shame,” says Butler, “a man can as little doubt whether it was given him to prevent his doing shameful actions, as he can doubt whether his eyes were given him to guide his steps.^m” The examination into the final cause brings out

¹ See Butler's Sermon on Resentment.

^m Sermon II. on Human Nature.

the active principles, *as they are active*—as they are energies (to use Aristotle's language)—as they exist, consequently, for the moralist.

In consequence of this characteristic of the moral principles, Moral Philosophy has been described as the science of what *ought* to be, whilst Physical Philosophy is the science of what *is*.ⁿ The distinction has been laid down

ⁿ “The purpose of the physical sciences, throughout all their provinces, is to answer the question, *What is?* They consist only of facts arranged according to their likeness, and expressed by general names given to every class of similar facts. The purpose of the moral sciences is, to answer the question, *What ought to be?* They aim at ascertaining the rules which *ought* to govern voluntary action, and to which those habitual dispositions of mind which are the source of voluntary actions *ought* to be adapted.”—*Sir James Mackintosh's Prelim. Dissert. on Prog. of Ethic. Phil. Encyc. Brit.* 7th edit. p. 296.

“A physical law of nature is a general state of what is uniform or common in the order of things, and is addressed to the powers of perception and sagacity. A moral law of nature is equally general, though an expression not of a fact, but of what is good, and is addressed to the powers of estimation and choice. Respecting the subjects of moral law, whatever may be their actual condition, the law does not state what is, but enjoins what ought to be done or avoided. Physical law is applied to the formation of theory, or explanation of phenomena, and is the foundation of power. Moral law is applied to determine the choice of voluntary agents, and suggest the purpose to which their power is, or ought to be employed.”—*Ferguson's Princ. of Mor. and Polit. Science*, vol. i. p. 159.

without sufficient explanation ; but it is a just one if rightly conceived, and not construed so as to mean that moral truth is not equally *truth of fact*, as physical is. In Physics we have no principles to judge from, independently of what we learn by observation ; and we have no reason, therefore, to search beyond the positive effects, and to say of any particular, this should have been otherwise. In Morals, on the contrary, we are entitled to ask whether the effect is as it *ought* to be. This inquiry, which is presumptuous and futile in Physics, is just and philosophical in Morals. For here we are exploring the tendencies of principles existing in the heart,—principles which are express *moral informations* ; not like those of the intellect, mere elements of thought and belief, or faculties to be exercised in order to obtaining a knowledge of the external world. Whilst the page of history and our own observations supply materials here analogous to those about which physical science is employed, we have also a store of principles within us demanding to be consulted. These are as indisputable facts as those collected from the course of the world : and to pass them over unstudied would be only the evidence of an unphilosophical spirit.

We must first, indeed, examine any moral effect as we would a physical one. We must analyse it, and reduce it to its scientific expression. This is, as it were, to read it correctly. But still, its moral meaning remains to be elicited; and this must be decided by viewing it in connexion with our moral nature, and judging whether it properly represents, and is in accordance with our internal perceptions. This process is the account of the application of the term, *ought*, to moral subjects.^o When we ask whether an effect is *as it ought* to be, we ask whether a moral principle is applied to its proper object, and in such a manner as fully to accomplish the object of that principle.

We must be careful, however, not to confound this inquiry into moral tendencies, which is the right application of the doctrine of Final Causes in Moral Philosophy, with the external effects of an action, or the actual consequences of its performance. This would be to abandon the region of Moral Science, and confine ourselves to the consideration of actions merely as physical events or effects.

^o Cudworth's Immutable Truth.

The caution is not superfluous ; for it is no less an error than this that Paley has committed in his treatise of *Moral Philosophy*. Instead of analysing actions into their principles and objects, and taking his view of the tendencies of actions from their internal relations, as perfect or imperfect exhibitions of the moral principles, and, accordingly, drawing his rules from the effect which the principles ought to produce by their own nature ; he merely directs our attention to the calculation of the probable consequences of actions in fact ; their observed tendency to produce good or evil in the long run, in the general issue to mankind at large. Whence has naturally resulted (the very method of investigation which *Moral Philosophy* exacts being totally neglected) a superficial philosophy, and a cold intellectual morality.

In continuing these observations, I shall endeavour to throw further light on the doctrine of Final Causes, by pointing out more distinctly the office which it discharged in the ancient systems of Philosophy.

Moral truth appears to have been the great object of research by all thoughtful minds, in

all periods of the world. The demands of action are far more imperative than those of thought. Whatever inquiries, accordingly, men would make into the mysteries of nature, it would at first be principally with a view of ascertaining the *conduct* of nature, and knowing what man should do in that condition in which he finds himself placed. The inquiry into Final Causes would naturally, therefore, take precedence of every other, and draw over to itself all other methods of investigation. This will more fully appear if we advert to the rise of Philosophy.

The rise of Philosophy seems justly to have been attributed by Plato, and after him by Aristotle, to the feeling of admiration. Objects and phenomena strike our attention, by their beauty, or their grandeur, or their strangeness, and thus awaken inquiry as to their cause, and mode of operation. Adam Smith, taking up and slightly varying this doctrine, further explains it by the theory, that the imagination seeks relief from the shock experienced in sudden transitions; philosophical principles presenting, as he observes, a kind of bridge between events which, though consecutive, have no apparent connexion, and thus enabling

the mind to pass with ease from one to the other.^p

At any rate it is not sameness, but variety and suddenness of events, which attracts the first inquiries. Things to which the untutored eye is accustomed, do not awaken that attention which is implied in the pursuit of philosophy. The very continuance seems sufficiently to account for the repetition of the phenomena; at least it suggests to the ordinary observer no reason to think that the case should be otherwise; no uneasiness is experienced; no previous judgment is shocked; no objection tasks the mind for its solution. Change, on the contrary, at once arrests the thought. It suggests the idea of some power producing it, and solicits curiosity to ascertain the nature of the interruption.

In the infancy of the human mind, this inquiry naturally connected itself with emotions of awe and fear. While all things around him continue as they are, the simple spectator of the course of nature feels no apprehension for his own safety. He is like those distrusters in the revealed providence of God, who are described in Scripture as scoffing at the promise of the Lord's coming,

^p See the Fragments in the last volume of his works.

because, "since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."⁹ The exhibition of miracles as the signs of God's dealings is founded on this principle of human nature. Such pre-eminently was the mission of the Deluge. It roused the world from a profane security in the order of nature; lifting up the supine thought to the power which so suddenly opened the windows of heaven, pouring down wrath and destruction on all flesh.

The awakened fears of the human mind in the first impulses of surprise, attribute the phenomena which thus attract its notice to personal agency, such as its own. The first idea of causation that occurs to the simple man, is that involved in the power of his own mind; for he knows and feels that he can produce alterations by his own intrinsic energy. Every instance in which he moves a limb or gives utterance to a thought, impresses on him this idea. By analogy, therefore, when he sees the like effects produced in the course of nature,—when any alteration takes place there,—he assigns it to a power like his own. Hence it is that the language of all early science is drawn from the notion of moral influences.

⁹ 2 Peter iii. 4.

The first principles of the ancient Physics, we may observe, were moral propositions; as, “that nature does nothing in vain or imperfect”—“that nature abhors a vacuum”—“that contraries reject contraries,” and the like. What in the rudest form gives a basis to the popular mythologies, becomes, when assumed into philosophy, a theory of final causes, of moral motives and agencies, animating and impelling the course of nature. In the same way, too, all early philosophy is essentially theological. The power of causation in the original conception of it is human in its kind, but, as applied to account for effects beyond the power of man, it is regarded as superhuman in degree, and takes the form of a speculation on the primary causes of the good and the evil done in the universe. For as the observed changes in nature were productive of good or evil effects, so would the first inquirers attribute them to good or evil divine *agents*; and the whole of philosophy, at this stage of its history, is an attempt to solve the *designs* of nature as they are conceived to be for evil or for good.

In conformity with this fact, we may go a step beyond the theory of the rise of philosophy, which attributes it to emotions of admi-

ration or surprise, and say, rather, that it is the natural offspring of the human heart anxiously seeking after that good for which it instinctively craves. Irregularity and change perplex with vague apprehensions of evil; and the heart returns within itself from looking abroad into the world, to ask,—“who will show us any good?” who will reveal to us, amidst the blackness of clouds and dark waters, the rainbow of comfort and gladdening promise? Philosophy thus springs up as the natural ally of Religion, and is associated with Religion in its progress. Without it, an undisciplined religion runs into superstition,—the counterpart in the human mind of the manifold phenomena of the external world, and of the humours and caprices of the vacillating will of man; like the clouds of a stormy sky assuming each chimerical shape which the shifting breath of the wind may give them. With Philosophy, on the other hand, Religion is invested with the regularity and permanence of an unchanging law: the dominion of good is visibly established and proved: evil appears in its true light, only as a nonentity or an accident, the mere result of untoward circumstances obstructing the good really designed throughout the universe.

Or the case may be otherwise stated thus :—

There appears to be a three-fold effort on the part of the mind to explain the phenomena which strike its attention. It wishes to know what is the immediate physical power which produces the result—out of what antecedent it has arisen—with what other event it is conjoined in fact ; then, proceeding beyond this, to detect a necessary connexion between the phenomenon and its cause, the dependence of one on the other, so that from the evidence of the one we may conclude the other. So far the intellect is satisfied. But this is not all that we require. We have other principles which task us for an answer. In the third place, then, we seek to interpret what we have observed, by the laws of human activity—to read in our hearts the moral principle from which the event has originated, to know what end or design is manifested in it. Now the last inquiry is what most immediately interests us, and without which, probably, the two former would never have demanded a solution. By the two former inquiries we bring the phenomenon home to our intellect ;—we translate it as it were into some principle of our own minds, and are enabled to contemplate it with the steadiness

and certainty of knowledge. By the latter we bring it home to our heart, and remove the disquietude which perplexes us, so long as we know not whether an event be for good or for evil,—whether it be addressed to our love or to our fears.

Philosophy, accordingly, naturally commenced with an explanation of the good and evil in nature, as with what most interested such a being as man. Thus, too, it naturally branched off into two heads ;—into a religious philosophy on the one hand, showing how all things that exist are good, and the operation of a benevolent principle ;—that half-religious system, on the other hand, which teaches an evil principle coordinate with the good, and explains present appearances as the result of a struggle between antagonist forces. For the first rough observations made in taking a moral survey of the world, would naturally throw its phenomena into two great classes of good and evil. If both these classes were taken in their complex form without analysis, there would result, of course, Two Supreme Principles—the good and the evil. But an analytical process would show to some more gifted intellect, and more open heart, that the good prevailed, and might be traced

even in what had once been too hastily ascribed to a principle of evil. And hence would result a system of perfect optimism, which should carry throughout to the interpretation of nature the theory, that whatever is is best.

Moral Philosophy, then, may properly be regarded as the first scientific conception of the human intellect—a crude and vague moral philosophy indeed, but still essentially such in principle. As philosophy became more a science in itself, speculators began to neglect the moral views in which it had originated. Thus we find Socrates complaining, in the *Phædo*, of the method of Anaxagoras, who, after giving the specious promise of explaining all things on the principle of Intellect, had deviated into disquisitions concerning the material elements of bodies. Instead of showing, says Socrates, how all things were as well as they possibly could be, or how each thing was constituted as it was because it was best so, he had only discoursed of the materials of which they were composed: which is much the same, he adds, as if any one were to allege that the reason of his sitting in the prison at Athens was, that his bones and nerves were constructed in a particular manner; instead of

stating the truth, that he thought it *better* to remain than to go to Megara or Bœotia.^r

Whether, however, it was in consequence of the efforts of Socrates, or from the original bias given towards the moral view of Nature, moral principles continued to give the tone to the philosophy of the Greek schools. Plato's works breathe the spirit of a religious morality throughout. In him, indeed, the religious principle, the theory of the Best, is dominant. It is the key to his whole philosophy. All nature is with him only an instrument of suggestion, a symbolical language, an introduction to the transcendental science of the real principles of love, and order, and beauty, which, originating in the Almighty mind, are diffused throughout the universe, though hidden from the eye of sensual observation. Not only does his system tend to establish the doctrine that "whatever is is best,"—but he assumes throughout, as a criterion of truth, the converse of this proposition, the hypothesis that "whatever is best, is." Aristotle, in like manner, in drawing out his theories, constantly refers to the tendencies of nature towards its own perfection, and takes his view, not from

^r Phædo, p. 221—225, ed. Bip.

what is in fact, but from what ought to be, from what each object would be if it attained its full stature of being.^s And thus, whilst his philosophy, as contrasted with the beautiful theism of Plato, is atheistical,—does not elevate the heart to the love of a supremely benevolent designer, the author of all that goodness which he worked upon in making out his scheme of truth,—it illustrates in every part the operation of a divine principle: all nature being, according to him, the various manifestation of Good, either realized in fact, or tending towards effect. See further the consummation of this mode of philosophizing in the system of Stoicism—its resistance and counteraction in the antagonist system of Epicurism. Stoicism was a practical philosophy, which had for its basis this doctrine of Optimism, this theory of the ultimate tendency of all things towards a good end—this mode of interpreting nature, not by what appears to observation, but by what may be conceived as its state of perfection. Hence was derived that stern resignation which it

^s Τὸ δὲ βέλτιον ἀεὶ ὑπολαμβάνομεν ἐν τῇ φύσει ὑπάρχειν, εἰαν ᾗ δυνατόν.—*Nat. Ausc.* VIII. c. 10, p. 421.

Εἰ δ' ἐστὶν οὕτω βέλτιον, ἢ διὰ τύχην εὐδαιμονεῖν, εὐλογον ἔχειν οὕτως· εἴπερ τὰ κατὰ φύσιν, ὡς οἶον τε κάλλιστα ἔχειν, οὕτω πέφυκεν.—*Ethic. Nic.* I. c. 9.

inculcated. The truly wise man of the Stoical school was one whose conduct was regulated by this conviction of a beneficial tendency in every various circumstance of the world. Epicurism, on the contrary, was an attempt to give the ascendancy to the physical spirit of inquiry over the moral and theological. Philosophers had certainly carried the doctrine of final causes too far. By making it not a subordinate and auxiliary element of physical inquiry, but an essential, and, indeed, principal one, they had been led into hypotheses and fanciful constructions of systems correspondent to their own assumptions, and unsupported by experience. It was but a natural reaction, therefore, from this excess, to give greater prominence to the theories of the physical philosophers, Democritus and Leucippus; and in the zeal of opposition to reject all conclusions respecting the agency of nature. Epicurism, consequently, lost the argument for a divine providence. By excluding the speculation concerning final causes, it denied the proper evidences of design, and left the world independent of Deity. Acquiescence, satisfaction, present enjoyment, were the moral effects which it aimed to accomplish: for these feelings clearly correspond with that

view of nature which regards the present forms of objects as the whole account of their existence, nor takes in the consideration, whether they may not be destined for nobler ends and higher modes of being.

It may be seen from these references what an important part was held in the ancient philosophy by the speculation into Final Causes; and, consequently, to what extent the spirit of Moral Philosophy entered into and characterised the ancient systems.

The observation of this fact may further explain, in a great measure, why there should have been no independent moral philosophy in the schools of Greece; and also why ethical disquisition should have assumed the particular form in which we find it, so far as it was recognized as a peculiar study,—that of an inquiry into the Chief Good.^t

^t Aristotle must be excepted from this general observation. But his works were long lost to the world soon after his death; and could not, therefore, produce that change which might have been expected from them, in the general mode of philosophizing.

LECTURE V.

It is of leading importance, in pursuing the study of Moral Science, to be fully aware of the fundamental difference in the evidence belonging to the facts about which it is conversant, and that of physical facts. Uniformity is the characteristic of physical facts. Change, unconformity, uncertainty, characterise those of the moral world. In the former, we are engaged in speculating on the cause of that invariableness which we observe in them: the question is,—what are the general principles to which this constant order, so unerring, so sure, may be referred,—what gives that wonderful *sameness* to multiform fugitive phenomena? In the latter, we are inquiring whence it is that the same principles of human nature exhibit such wild *diversity* of results;—effects which we know to proceed from fixed

principles in the human constitution, but which, from their irregularity, might seem rather the sport and caprice of fortune ; our endeavour being, as it were, to throw a chain over the rapids of human life, and give fixedness to the wayward rolling stream.

To illustrate this difference by example. If an experiment in natural science be once accurately performed, and the result ascertained, there is no need to repeat it, so far as the conclusion is concerned. If the experimenter is confident that no error has been committed in any circumstance necessary for the attainment of the result, he is perfectly satisfied of the truth of his conclusion. If he repeats the experiment, it is only to correct any error that may have been made in these respects ; to estimate the effect of any imperfection in the instruments employed, or in the process itself, or in his reasoning. It is not to try whether, all circumstances being the same, a different conclusion will be obtained respecting the processes of nature. He never doubts that the same data of nature, will, in the same circumstances, give exactly the same results. One good experiment is decisive with him as to the question in hand.

But it is not so with the moral philosopher. He must have a very large induction of facts, and contemplate the principle which he would establish, in a great variety of lights, in order to establish his conclusion satisfactorily. Though he has most carefully inferred the connexion of certain actions with a certain character ; however sure he may be of the facts from which he reasons, and of the correctness of his reasonings from them ; he cannot reckon with full confidence on the recurrence of such connexion in any future instance. He always feels some apprehension of disappointment on a repetition of the trial. It is only when he contemplates mankind in the large masses of society, that he pronounces with any thing of that confidence with which the physical inquirer affirms his conclusions. The conduct and character of bodies of men, as of castes, and professions, and parties, exhibit broader and more distinct lights and shadows. The spirit of human liberty seems then deprived of its own shifting volubility, and imprisoned in the alien form of positive material facts. There is a strong analogy at least between such moral facts, and the more variable ones of the material world ; such as the phenomena of the clouds, of wind, of meteors ; the occurrence

of frost during any particular period, compared with the regular rising and setting of the sun ; or material phenomena in general, compared with the medical treatment of the human frame, or with the effects produced by the fine arts. Accordingly those philosophers, who have sought to establish moral truth with an irrefragable evidence, have drawn their conclusions from principles of political science ; from the view of man in social masses, where, a larger range being allowed, there is greater opportunity for a recurrence of the same facts, and greater uniformity of operation. Or else, they have merged moral truth into metaphysics ; and, quitting the variable scene of human conduct, sought, like Pythagoras and Plato, a resting place to their theory in the pure abstractions of the intellect. Or again, as another solution of their perplexity, they have resorted to the supposition of the "Great Year," whose revolution should restore uniformity to the moral no less than to the natural world, by bringing back the train of the same events.

Alter erit tum Tiphys, et altera quæ vehat Argo
Delectos heroas : erunt etiam altera bella,
Atque iterum ad Trojam magnus mittetur Achilles.

What, then, is the reason of this difference

between the conclusions respectively formed by these two classes of philosophers? Evidently, in one case, there is a fundamental conviction of the uniformity of the facts of nature ; in the other case, there is as strong a conviction of the contingency and variableness of moral facts. I speak of uniformity as distinct from immutable necessity, and of contingency and variableness, as distinct from random force and capricious uncertainty, which would preclude all scientific knowledge. For neither does the physical inquirer suppose that the facts which he examines *must be* as they are ; he is only sure that they *will be* so always. Nor does the moral philosopher suppose that there is no limit to the variation of moral facts ; but only that the range is wide, and the limit of them very difficult to be circumscribed with exactness.

The ancients, indeed, for the most part, (perhaps all, with the exception of Aristotle, who is himself not quite free from the prejudice,) contrasted physical and moral truth by broad characteristics of this kind, referring the former to the class of necessary immutable truths, the latter to the class of truths contingent, or only holding for the most part ; making an essential difference where there is

none *in kind*, but, in reality, only a difference *of degree*. And thus some despaired of attaining to any proper science of practical things. But to speak rightly, both moral and physical truths equally belong as to their nature to the class of contingencies. We have no reason to conclude, that a physical fact must be as it is, any more than a moral one. Either may be conceived different from what it is without involving any absurdity ; and consequently the assertion of necessity cannot properly be made respecting either one or the other. But yet this difference in degree is quite sufficient to impress that entire difference of character, which we remark in the speculations of the two classes of philosophers. It is a sufficient reason why the single experiment should be decisive in physics, and why, on the contrary, even a collection of instances still leaves us in doubt as to the result in morals.

In one sense, indeed, moral facts might seem to be under a necessity, rather than those of physics. For when they are contemplated as the work of mind, they are invested with that character of steadiness and perseverance, which we attribute to the agency of design in contrast with such effects as in our ignorance we attribute to fortune. We argue

design, as I remarked in the last Lecture, wherever we observe regular adaptation of means to ends, mutual relation of parts, constant accomplishment of results. And we argue in this way by the very constitution of our minds,—the notion of design being suggested to us by every such observation. Conversely, then, where we know there is design, we reckon on an uniformity of result. But this notion of uniformity is evidently drawn from a contrast with the desultory course of events, of which we know not the cause. It is to be understood therefore as opposed to caprice or humour, and not to the course of external nature.

Again, the unchangeableness of moral truth, of which (whatever may be the speculative questions concerning it) we have an instinctive conviction, gives us an assurance of a corresponding character in moral facts. We may very easily conceive the laws of external nature entirely changed. “The fire may have power in the water, forgetting his own virtue; and the water may forget his own quenching nature.” But we cannot conceive an alteration of the laws of morality, so that what is virtuous now may become vicious to-morrow or a thousand years hence. There is no

miracle in this region, no deviation from established law, but Sin. Looking to this point of view, we see the facts of the moral world as only varied expressions of one invariable law. Hence the just and forcible observation of Butler, that nothing is so truly formidable to the wicked as the Divine Goodness. “Malice,” he says, “may be appeased or satiated; humour may change; but goodness is a fixed, steady, immovable principle of action.”^a Mere power, again, may or may not be exerted, but goodness cannot but exert itself; it must necessarily, by its very nature, do right. The law by which it operates must take effect with blessing to the good, whilst the bad must inevitably feel how truly awful it is.

When, indeed, we thus trace moral laws up to their divine original, as the everlasting principles by which the Judge of all the earth has ruled the course of events, they assume a fixedness of character, and, consequently, a scientific grandeur, far surpassing the utmost stability which we attribute to physical laws. For the utmost stability that we attribute to physical laws is that of permanence, or long continuance: the moral laws must be conceived as eternal. But, further, (without

^a Pref. to Sermons, p. 21.

taking into consideration the miracles of revealed religion) we have reason even to think that physical laws have actually varied at a remote period. At the creation, as Butler remarks,^b a different law was in operation from that which upholds the established course of nature. In the antediluvian age, the life of man was protracted to such a length beyond what man now attains, that we cannot but suppose that some causes were then in action which have now ceased. Probably, too, this difference in the human system was answered by corresponding variations in external nature. At any rate, when we consider those great alterations which the physical constitution of man has undergone, there is enough to make us hesitate in applying our conclusions from the present state of the material world, to a period beyond the record of observations.^c

^b Anal. Part II. chap. 2. On the Supposed Presumption against Miracles.

^c “The succession and increase of the human race are of those phenomena which we shall not be justified in subjecting to the calculations of any fixed immutable laws, for the ordinary state of things, in all seasons of the world. God has kept the system of nature in this great instance in his own hands; witness the disparate longevity of man in different periods since the creation. And if the term of human life have varied from seven hundred to seventy years, what a multitude of other phenomena connected with the succes-

Under this aspect, therefore, the invariableness of physical truth yields to that of moral. There must be a real permanence in the latter intrinsic to it, derived from the moral unchangeableness of the Divine Being. It is only *relatively to us*, that there is more of change in moral truth : it is only the difficulty we feel in reaching some point of rest that gives the variableness and uncertainty to this class of sciences. And this difference must be constantly borne in mind in whatever we may admit as to the variableness of moral facts. It must be remembered that we do not speak so of them in themselves, but as they are cognizable by our understanding. We express only the depth and breadth of the views by which such truths are to be seized, the difficulty in seizing them, and the caution and delicacy required in their investigation.

This uncertainty attending our moral

sion and increase of the species, may have partaken of a similar variation It is a precarious hypothesis to assume, without limit, a perpetual uniform action, retrospectively, for the general system of the world. Since man, in his physical constitution, has undergone such a change, what may not have happened to other parts of the Natural System ?"—*Davison's Disc. on Prophecy*, p. 144, note. Ed. 1824.

speculations is strikingly contrasted with the positiveness of our physical conclusions, in the very existence of systems of morality and laws of government. Why are precepts laid down, why are laws expressly enacted, but on account of the uncertainty belonging to actions in which human nature is the agent? We find no occasion for drawing out systems of the course of nature with a view to our ordinary conduct in regard to it, or to regulate its operation so that we may know what to expect from it, or what to do. We feel sure that all things will continue as they are; that the sun will rise and set as before; that summer and winter will come in succession; that bodies will fall to the earth. But we do not feel sure that the conduct observed in one man will recur in the same individual, much less in mankind at large. What will happen in given contingencies is certain in physics, however remote the fact itself may be from our reach. We doubt not that the same agents will work the same effects, at whatever time we may discern them in operation. All that is uncertain here is our own knowledge of them. But in morals we are as sure, on the other hand, that what will happen in given contingencies is

itself the uncertainty; that if our knowledge of what *is now*, were ever so clear and certain, it would not necessarily avail for a future instance, because the effects themselves are infinitely variable.

The *negative* induction, indeed, is often as immediate as in physics. We may be often sure, from a single instance, of the non-existence of a particular principle. A dishonest act, for example, is a certain evidence to us of the absence of perfectly honest principle; agreeably to which we say that it is impossible for an honest man to do a dishonest act. But it is not so with our positive inferences. Many instances of an honest action must come before us, to enable us to say that an honest principle exists in the agent. For we know that outward acts of virtue may be performed accidentally, or with reference to wrong ends; and we require a number of consecutive instances to establish our conclusion. So also, on the other hand, unless the instance before us be some gross fault, which carries its condemnation on its front, we withhold the extreme blame due to vice from single appearances of vicious conduct, and wait for their repetition to decide the positive criminality of the character in

question. The right principle may exist, may be superior to common temptations, but, in given cases, may have been overpowered by the force of circumstances, which it required a more than ordinary virtue to withstand.^d

To meet this uncertainty, accordingly, in moral facts, rules of duty and laws are devised. There would be no need of these, any more than of rules respecting the every-day facts of nature, if all were uniform and constant here, as there. But the principles of man's moral nature, we feel, are uncertain in their operation. Hence moralists and legislators, having discovered principles subservient to the good of the individual and of society, have drawn these out into rules for the direction of conduct; and have thus secured a much greater uniformity than could possibly have taken place without such systems. At any rate, they have approximated to that constancy which marks the course of external nature; the reason of man being here, in the proper concerns and dominion of man, the instrument, by which Divine Wisdom produces

^d See Butler's Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue. "It may be observed further, concerning our perception of good and ill desert," &c. p. 436.

the like results to those, which unthinking nature produces by dint of its fixed constitution. After all, indeed, precepts and laws are but approximations to the constancy of nature. For the disorder and irregularity remain in spite of these corrective forces, evincing the variableness of the moral world in still stronger contrast with the simple unaided regularity of the physical. Still they are evidently part of the scheme of Divine Government, by which provision is made against the excess of the anomalies of the moral world.

Hence the first efforts of moral science consisted of rules delivered in a didactic or imperative form; as the Proverbs of Solomon, the apothegms of the Seven Wise Men, and the sententious maxims which have obtained a proverbial sanction and currency. The wisdom of man has sought to counteract by its authority in such instances as these, the irregular course of Passion, and to limit, at least, the range of moral variation. And perhaps we may trace to the like feeling, the primary importance given by the laws of social intercourse to the principle of veracity. It is commonly felt that there is no possibility of associating with a man, on whom at least

this law does not operate, so as to impart some principle of stability to his conduct. Thus, among the Persians, according to Herodotus, the duty of veracity comprised the whole of their moral education.* In like manner, to secure a certain uniformity in their actions, persons bind themselves by vows. So again, in the Oriental form of society, the institution of castes, and the perpetuity of the same institutions, have been the means which despotism has laid hold of, for confining the waywardness of the human will, and reducing within limits a power, which, if left to its own action, seems to defy all calculation of its procedure. Solon, on the other hand, was so perplexed by the varied views resulting from an extensive observation of mankind, as to abandon all certainty in moral judgments. His theory of happiness, (as you will remember from the beautiful description of it given by Herodotus,) passed over the whole career of the living man, and took its stand at the tomb; proceeding on the conviction that there only could the result be unerringly pronounced.

It is from looking too much to this apparent irregularity of moral facts, on the one

* Ἀληθείζεσθαι. Herodot. Clio. c. 136.

hand, and the counteraction of it afforded by positive precepts and institutions on the other, that some philosophers have fallen into the error of asserting that all morality is by law, by positive institution, and not by nature. They have taken up the auxiliary system, and made it the prime mover; not considering that the truth and necessity of these secondary moral laws result from the higher laws, to which they relate. They have speculated like those early astronomers who solved the celestial phenomena by their spheres and epicycles, and overlooked the more truly actuating influence, the simple original force of gravity, by which these complex movements, if real, must have been explained.

It will further illustrate the nature of the irregularity observed in moral facts, if we consider that the physical world is one in itself; one system of laws guides its manifold operations; whilst the moral world is composed of innumerable distinct systems. Each individual man is in himself an entire constitution, having his own powers of thought and action independent of those of every other man. So, too, each society of men is a distinct system in itself, in which all the

various motives of conduct are exerted under some modification, independently of every other society, Each department, indeed, of external nature, each portion of matter, is distinct, but not in the same manner in which human beings are. Each particle, for instance, of a heap of sand exemplifies the laws of matter as completely in itself alone, as the whole collective heap. Still, in the comparison with one another, they are as if they were identical; we have no reason to think that they differ otherwise than numerically from one another. But it is not so with the individuals of human nature. As we are conscious of a power of action in ourselves, subject to our own will; so we must conclude analogously of every other participator of the same nature. As we conclude that there must be general resemblances among all men, laws which hold good with respect to the whole species; so we must also conclude, that the free-will and power of which we are conscious in ourselves, must infinitely diversify, in different men, the operation of the same general principles.

We do not suppose, at the same time, that this independent power of causation can exceed the limits of those general laws which

comprehend the whole race of human beings. However, either in our own persons, or in the case of others, we may observe the laws of right violated, we still feel that their obligation is absolute; that they are imperatively binding on man, even at the moment when the force of passion stimulates the will to transgress them. Their supremacy and their cogency still stand forth to the view of our reason, and we must disown our very nature, to say that they are not, in the strictest sense, its positive laws of conduct. It is on the strength of this natural conviction of a fundamental sameness of principles, amidst the endless variety of individual cases, that the historian enunciates his expectation of the recurrence of corresponding behaviour in successive generations, "so long as human nature continues the same." Even when we descend from the high ground of the laws of Duty, we shall find in the region of human passions, amidst all the contrarieties of appearances and wildness of the prospect, an horizon, on whose circle the eye of philosophy may calmly rest. Only, as I have remarked before, it is extremely difficult to reach this boundary, in comparison with the effort generally required on the

part of the physical inquirer. It needs a much larger and more rigorous survey of instances. We have to guard against assigning, as general principles, the peculiarities of individuals, and making a mere record of moral events pass for laws of our moral nature. And a greater caution is exacted than in physics; because in each instance we encounter a disturbing force, for whose aberrations we must make allowance. Thus Thucydides, in pointing out the instruction to be derived from the sedition at Corcyra for future similar occasions, omits not to add, that the operation of the principles will be varied according to the peculiar contingencies of the case.^f

Further, I may remark another strong contrast between physical and moral experiences. The former are incapable of mutual action in such a way that the occurrence of a fact may modify its reappearance on another occasion. But moral facts have by their nature a mutual action. Thus, in describing the circumstances of the sedition to which

^f Γιγνόμενα μὲν, καὶ ἀεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαίτερα, καὶ τοῖς εἶδεσι διηλλάγμενα, ὥς ἂν ἕκασται αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχῶν ἐφιστῶνται.—*Thucyd.* III. c. 82.

I have just referred, the historian observes, that subsequent cases were aggravated, *πύσσει τῶν προγενομένων*, by the very knowledge of what had passed on previous occasions. An illustration of this may be drawn from the observation which so readily suggests itself to our minds on reading accounts of crimes in the newspapers. We anticipate the mischievous effects of such narratives on the ill-disposed, in furnishing them with examples of modes and kinds of crime, which the vicious thought has only been waiting to learn. I have heard, indeed, of instances where the guilt so displayed has been actually imitated, and has produced its unhappy counterpart in some flagrant delinquency. But the general force of Example is sufficient evidence to this point. It shows that the effects of moral agency are not unconnected instances of general laws, but are subject to influences from their antecedents of the same kind; so that, what will happen in a given contingency depends often, not simply on the principles themselves in operation, but also on what has happened before in a like contingency. And this holds to such a degree, that the effect will be qualified, or, perhaps counteracted, by the lessons derived to the agents from that par-

ticular experience. The nation that has large historical recollections, or the man who is conversant with the world of human society, will, in their respective spheres of conduct, exhibit a course of actions very different from those of a nation without literature, or a man without knowledge of the world.

An influence of this kind, derived from Example, it should be observed, is different in its action from that which different portions of matter exert on each other. For while these last act on one another; as, for instance, the moon and the earth on each other, whilst both gravitate towards the sun;—this action is but the influence of that common law by which all are governed, whether separately or collectively. It is not an action peculiarly resulting from the individual, over and above the operation of the general law. But, in moral agency, it is so: it is the peculiar operation of the individual instance—its influence, that is, in reproducing itself in the conduct of the independent agent, man; on whom it operates as a principle of action in itself, by the very force of the Example which it exhibits.[§]

§ This fact supplies Paley with the great defence of his system of morality. An act of assassination, according to his

But here we are encountered by an opinion of Locke, that moral truths are capable of exact demonstration. This clearly applies only to ethical doctrines, and not to moral principles in the wide sense, as contrasted with physical. Still, as the statement is ostensibly adverse to what has been already said on the nature of moral evidence, it seems to demand our notice in the course of introductory observations such as the present.

The ground on which he holds this opinion is, that the complex ideas of the several virtues, or modes of action, are formed by our own minds, and not drawn from "substances" or real existences.

"Upon this ground," he says, "I am bold to think that morality is capable of demonstration, as well as mathematics: since the precise real essence of the things words stand for may be perfectly known; and so the congruity and incongruity of the things themselves be certainly discovered; in which consists perfect knowledge."^h

This opinion of Locke is an offshoot of theory, is wrong; because, if *generally imitated*, the *general consequence* of it would be bad.—*Mor. and Pol. Phil.* B. II. c. 7, 8.

^h Essay on Hum. Und. B. III. c. 11. s. 16. p. 50.

his theory of the origin of ideas. Experience is assumed to be, not simply the condition of the development of the moral principles in the heart of man, but the foundation of them, that which originates them, or makes them what they are. His whole theory of morality rests on our knowledge of the good or evil consequences of actions, and not on the tendency of the feelings to their own perfection in action. Instead of looking to the final cause of each feeling, and inquiring whether it obtains its full stature and proportion under such or such a modification, he neglects altogether this prior and more intimate question. Taking actions in the concrete, he tests their moral nature by their tendency to produce the pleasure or pain annexed to them by some external law. So far, indeed, does he overlook the internal moral nature of actions, that he considers it adverse to the very idea of a moral law, to suppose good and evil "the natural product and consequence of the action itself." "For that," he says, "being a natural convenience or inconvenience, would operate of itself without a law." May it not be said, rather, that such a dispensation would be the perfection of law? the reward and the punishment being

involved in the moral act, and following thus immediately, and inevitably, and in the most exact proportion.

“ Good and evil,” he observes, “ are nothing but pleasure or pain, or that which produces pleasure or pain to us. Moral good and evil, then, is only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law, whereby good or evil is drawn on us by the will and power of the law-maker; which good and evil, pleasure or pain, attending our observance or breach of the law, by the decree of the law-maker, is that we call reward or punishment.”ⁱ

According to Locke, then, moral ideas do not rest on any evidence of fact: they are merely abstractions formed by the mind, from observation of the effects of actions, or of those qualities in them which are pleasurable or painful in ultimate effect to the agent. The only *reality* belonging to the subject, according to him, is the natural good or evil attendant on actions.

The whole science of Ethics is thus no longer an interpretation of “ Know Thyself;” but only a systematic view of the method

ⁱ Essay on Hum. Und. B. II. c. 28. s. 5.

of rewarding and punishing observed in the world. Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, and the other virtues, are as purely notional, as the straight lines and circles and triangles of mathematical science; and the various rules of conduct are the necessary consequences deduced from the definitions of the virtues. Morality, under this point of view, is only a method of calculation on human actions; a science on a footing with arithmetic or geometry, rather than with physics; an instrument for facilitating the process of the mind in discerning and estimating the pleasures and pains of life; a set of rules, to save the labour of constant reference to the fundamental consideration of the good and evil tendencies of actions.

It is remarkable that this description of the nature of Moral Science, the offspring of the empiricism of modern philosophy, should have been originally derived from the idealism of the ancient schools. The Pythagoreans naturally transferred the thoughts and phraseology of that mathematical science to which they were devoted, to morality as well as other sciences, and thus drew their theory of justice from the doctrine of ratios. Whoever has read attentively the fifth book of Aristotle's

Ethics, will have noticed the mathematical tone of thought which pervades it. Thus also Plato speaks of the need of a science of Mensuration, Μετρητική, to enable the mind to ascertain the real magnitude of pleasures and pains, which deceive the mind, as he represents the case, in like manner, as objects of sight, according to their nearness or remoteness, appear greater or less to the eye than they are in reality.^k These early philosophers, indeed, did not lower moral truth to the standard of mere assumptions; for they conceived, that in founding it on abstract ideas, they attributed to it a stability which no observed facts could confer on it. Their object was to erect it on an immutable basis, by exempting it altogether from the transient phenomena of our sensible experience. Still, if morality be founded on abstract ideas, it becomes the business of philosophy to define these ideas, and to proceed from them synthetically as the primary truths of the science, to the deduction of the particular principles of conduct. But

^k Εἰ οὖν ἐν τούτῳ ἡμῖν ἦν τὸ εὖ πράττειν, ἐν τῷ τὰ μὲν μεγάλα μήκη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λαμβάνειν, τὰ δὲ σμικρὰ καὶ φεύγειν καὶ μὴ πράττειν, τίς ἂν ἡμῖν σωτηρία ἐφάνη τοῦ βίου; ἄρα ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη, ἣ ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις; κ.τ.λ.—*Plato, Protagor.* p. 182.

what is this but to constitute ethics into a demonstrative science, analogous to pure mathematics? It was consistent with this view that Plato should regard it as a method of *Mensuration*, an instrument of the mind such as arithmetic, rather than a knowledge of the human heart.

By an opposite course of proceeding, Hobbes, and after him Locke, and then Paley, fell into the same train of thought, whilst they confined their attention solely to the phenomena of reward and punishment, the external facts by which the presence or absence of virtue is indicated. Abandoning all science of Actions in themselves, they were carried out of the proper orbit of moral truth, to seek a system of rules in the abstractions of the human mind; and hence perversely represented the procedure of the moral judgment as the mere intellectual calculation of consequences.

Let it be admitted that there is, to a certain extent, a science of morality of this kind. For instance, that when we have classed actions under the heads of the several virtues, we may commence with defining what we denominate just, or temperate, &c., and from such definitions draw out as consequences the

particular actions of justice or temperance : or that we may assume a general principle of right, and deduce from it a series of consequences which shall be so many distinct rules of virtue. Yet what does all this reasoning, demonstratively accurate as it may be, amount to ? In jurisprudence such a system may be a real science : because here terms are to be defined ; formularies are to be interpreted ; the real meaning of a law or principle is to be ascertained ; consistency with the given law or principle is all that is required, and nothing more. For this purpose there must be definition of rights and wrongs ; of what murder is ; what homicide ; and so on : and accordingly particular rules are deduced for the interpretation of contingent cases. But in Ethics much more is required. Here we want to know, not what follows logically, but what will follow, in fact, amidst the contingencies of human life : we must have, not only a consistent rule, but one that promises success. Our system may be perfect as a calculus, but quite inefficient as a guide to conduct. In truth, the whole application of this demonstrative morality presupposes the real business of morality to be proceeding independently of it ; as the calculations of the mathematician

in their practical use presuppose the order of the universe and the laws of nature.

The boldest attempt, however, which has been made to impart the evidence of demonstration to moral truth is that of the Stoic philosophy. This system at once transferred the cogency of Logic to the contingent matter of human life, and insisted on the practical truth of its subtile deductions from given principles, with all the rigour and positiveness which belong to demonstrative reasoning. If a doctrine were true, it was maintained by the Stoics, whatever was consistent with it must also be true: a specious principle in sound; though most fallacious if applied to the actual course of the world. For consequences may be perfectly reasonable; yet, as following each from some one abstract view, they must be limited and qualified, when applied to real things, by the coexistence of other principles both known and unknown, operating at the same moment. But these influences were entirely disregarded by the Stoics in the dogmatism with which they pronounced on the truths of human life. Hence the violent paradoxes with which their system abounded. They gave, indeed, an air of majesty to their philosophy by this proud

contempt with which it looked down from its towers and battlements on the course of the world below. Their unimpassioned reason, secure within its fortification, laughed to scorn the fury and assaults of the host of besiegers encamped around it. It was only, however, the spurious confidence of an inexorable obstinacy, which such a system inspired,—the tenaciousness of the logical disputant, and not the resoluteness of the moral observer, of one possessing his soul in quietness and patience. Consistency of principle, and coherence of system, gave the appearance of truth. For men are disposed to admire even a faulty character, in which they contemplate some master principle, steadily working its way, and continuing unmoved, amidst the disturbance and contrariousness of its career.

Take, for instance, the Stoical paradox, that all crimes are equal. It is obvious that this conclusion is contradicted by the tenour of our moral experience. Neither in our own hearts, nor in the course of the world, do we find its verification. And yet, as a conclusion from the principles of Stoicism, it is undoubtedly true. If virtue is an ultimate point of attainment, a standard of perfect wisdom to be reached by stilling the affections into

apathy, then vice is the mere failing from this standard; it has no intrinsic criminality; and there is no question of *degrees* of viciousness. But the Stoic, instead of abandoning or modifying principles which led to such a paradoxical conclusion, clung to his demonstrative morality, and asserted his conclusion with a refractory defiance of the opposing facts. He might have seen, that even if such a conclusion were speculatively true, it was not necessarily in fact; had he taken into his view, at the same time, the notions of merit and demerit which accompany the exercise of our moral judgments. For on one ground it certainly is true that all crimes are equal: for, he that commits any one, equally violates the authority which forbids all wrong. And thus it is said; that he who is guilty of the breach of one commandment is "guilty of all." But then other considerations come in to qualify the verdict against transgression in each case. We compare the offence with the capacities of the agent, with the strength of the temptation which has solicited him, with his power of resistance. We examine the degrees of demerit, and thence are brought to discriminate shades of offence. The same observations may be made respecting duties. All duties are equal,

as deduced from the authority which prescribes them; but they vary infinitely, as estimated in relation to the agent, with reference to the merit of their performance.¹

So necessary is it to abandon the rigour of logical speculation in questions relating to human life, and to be fully aware beforehand of the nature of that evidence which alone moral truths can admit. We must constantly remember that all we are concerned to do in appreciating moral truth, is to examine whether the fact *really is*, or *really ought to be so*; and that we shall most certainly fail in attaining the objects of this class of sciences, and end our inquiries in mere hypothesis, if we seek to deduce the truth from abstract principles, and demand that demonstrativeness, which can only belong to sciences founded on definitions.^m You may be assured that in the event much less difficulty will be incurred by receiving *paradoxical facts* in their simple unconformity, than by entangling yourselves in *paradoxical deductions*. The former amaze the intellect, but still leave it free to

¹ See M. Cousin, *Fragmens Philosophiques*, p. 146. Paris, 1833.

^m Ἀρχὴ γὰρ τὸ ὅτι καὶ εἰ τοῦτο φαίνεται ἀρκούντως, οὐδὲν προσδεήσει τοῦ διότι.—*Aristot. Ethic. Nic.* I. 4.

act; the latter twine a subtile web around it, and choke every movement.

What, then, on the whole, shall we say is the nature of that Evidence which moral facts possess? In a word, we may answer that it is the evidence of *Analogy*. To the principles themselves, the feelings of the heart, on which all moral reasonings are ultimately built, there is, in the strictest sense, the evidence of a direct experience; taking that word in its widest sense, as applying to the facts both of our internal consciousness and external observation. If a person is unconscious of any such principles, if he confesses to no emotions of right and wrong, he is the ἀχρήσιος ἀνὴρ of Hesiod. There is no bringing any evidence of moral truth to bear on such a mind. This primary evidence is as necessary for the application of moral argument, as a perception of visual objects is for judging of the truths of optical science. I shall treat more fully, however, on this point in a subsequent Lecture. On the assumption, then, of the existence of the internal evidence in the heart of every moral inquirer, the evidence with which moral conclusions are brought home to such a mind, is, as I have

said, that of Analogy. Let us, then, distinctly see in what Analogy differs from Experience.

We are apt to employ both these terms in a loose popular sense; Experience, as synonymous with observation, or knowledge of events; Analogy, as only another name for similarity. It is important for the right study of all philosophy, and in particular for this branch of it, the facts of which are so fugitive, and so removed from the grasp of the superficial observer, to know precisely what mental processes are described by these terms. Experience, then, it should be observed, is not the mere collection of observations; it is the methodical reduction of them to their principles. First, the senses, or our internal consciousness, notice and record the observations; then, by the aid of memory, these observations are collected together; and at last comes the power of reason to tie them into one, and convert them by a spiritualizing process into a principle of mind.ⁿ It is in this last

ⁿ Ἐκ μὲν οὖν αἰσθήσεως γίνεται μνήμη, ὥσπερ λέγομεν· ἐκ δὲ μνήμης πολλάκις τοῦ αὐτοῦ γινομένης ἐμπειρία. αἱ γὰρ πολλαὶ μνήμαι τῷ ἀριθμῷ ἐμπειρία μία ἐστίν· ἐκ δὲ ἐμπειρίας, ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἡρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἐνὸς παρὰ τὰ πολλὰ, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτὸ, τέχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης· εἰ μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, τέχνης· εἰ δὲ περὶ τὸ ὄν, ἐπιστήμης.—*Aristot. Anal. Post.* II. c. ult.

stage that they properly constitute what, in the exact philosophical sense, we denominate Experience. Now Analogy supposes all this, but it goes a step further : and it is in that step that its weakness of evidence, as compared with Experience, is to be found. Experience is mere analysis. Analogy involves also a synthesis. Taking up a general principle, as given by Experience, Analogy represents this principle under some modification, and not in the simple form in which it was originally obtained. It is applied to cases in which some difference of circumstances is supposed ; as, for instance, in arguing from the formation of particular parts of one class of animals to the correspondences in another, the different nature, habits, circumstances, of the one class, are considered, and allowed for, in extending the given observation. Whenever any fact is drawn from actual observation upon it, and another is reasoned to from the first, the truth of the last is said properly to rest on the evidence of Analogy. If this analogy be afterwards verified by observation on the last case, then the analogy as it was merely before, is now converted into experience. The line, in fact, which separates a very close analogy from experience, becomes

undistinguishable at last, and either term seems equally appropriate to the evidence in such a case ; though, in logical accuracy, every fact not resting on actual observation of itself is a case of Analogy. Now in all reasonings concerning human life, we are obliged to depend on Analogy, if it were only from that uncertainty, and almost suspension of judgment, with which we must hold our conclusions. We can seldom obtain that number of instances which is requisite here to establish an inference indisputably. The conduct of persons or of parties may have been attended by certain antecedents and certain results in the examples before us ; still the state of the case may be owing, not so much to that conduct, as to other causes, which are shut out of our view, when our attention is fixed on the particular examples adduced for the purpose of the inference. We must thus be strictly on our guard against transferring to other cases, any thing merely contingent and peculiar to the instances on which our reasoning is founded. And this is what analogical reasoning requires and enables us to do. If rightly pursued, it is employed, at once, both in generalizing and discriminating ; in the acute perception at once of points of agreement and

points of difference. The acmé of the philosophical power is displayed in the perfect cooperation of these two opposite proceedings. We must study to combine in such a way as not to merge real differences; and so to distinguish as not to divert the eye from the real correspondence.

Such, then, is the spirit with which you must enter on the investigation of moral facts. You must not expect a perfect evidence; you must be prepared to allow for the anomalies which will occur to your observation, and resist that propensity to which philosophy itself is too prone to give way, of expecting to find, at the first view, exact harmonies in things which nature seems to delight to conceal, and to have reserved in her own power, to exercise the ingenuity, and discipline the patience of the mind.

LECTURE VI.

IN my first Lecture, I spoke of the confusion of thought with which the nature of Moral Philosophy was commonly apprehended,—of there being little agreement among men as to the subjects comprised under the general name of Moral Philosophy. It will be the purpose of the present Lecture, to state, and reduce into order, the several inquiries which properly belong to this head of science.

Having laid down the fundamental principle on which the whole investigation of the moral philosopher proceeds,—namely, that man is, in himself, an *'Αρχή*, or Principle of Activity; and that moral actions accordingly are the phenomena to which our study is to be directed in this department of knowledge; the way is already prepared for the matter in hand. I have only to introduce a discrimination among the facts to which, on the whole, I have called

your attention; and work out my outline, by pointing out the subordinate principles on which each separate inquiry constitutes a peculiar science.

I shall endeavour to bring before your view the several heads of moral science, in the order in which they seem naturally suggested to our minds.

The first inquiry, then, in that order, is, what the facts themselves *are* as they exist on the face of the moral world: without looking beyond the actual moral phenomena, our business is to collect these faithfully, and to state accurately the general principles in which they may be summed up and expressed.

Secondly, having rightly surveyed and stated these facts, we ascend to the examination of the principles themselves already ascertained as real moral facts, and collect further observations on them under this higher point of view.

In the first head of inquiry, we take moral facts into our contemplation, not as they are *moral* in the proper exclusive sense, but as they are *natural*—as parts of the history of humanity—records of the world as it is man's

world—illustrations of the power of man in moulding to his will that scene of things in which he lives and acts. The phenomena examined are undoubtedly moral phenomena ; but they are not taken strictly under a moral aspect.

In the second head of inquiry, the facts are not only moral, but they are *morally* contemplated. We examine them in themselves, and explore their true moral nature and character.

I should hope that the difference between these two heads of inquiry is perfectly intelligible and clear. I have all along been endeavouring to elucidate the difference between physical and moral facts. Perhaps, therefore, I may have given to some the idea, that the two classes of facts are entirely distinct, and that we cannot, in any sense, speak of moral truth as identical with physical. I would take this opportunity, if this be the case, of obviating such an impression. So far as the constitution and condition of man are part of the great system of Nature, moral truths certainly form part of the history and philosophy of Nature. But besides this general correspondence with the truths of

physics, they have also that peculiarity in them according to which we designate them *moral*; that is, when regarded as productions of the independent agent, man. Evidently, then, we may either consider these peculiar phenomena as parts of the general history of nature; or we may study them in themselves. In both cases, we are engaged in moral inquiries: in both, moral truth is the result. Only, in the first, we confine ourselves to natural classification of the observed facts. In the other case, we reduce moral facts to their ultimate moral principles.

It has happened, unfortunately, that moral philosophers have commenced with this latter inquiry, and have thus inverted the natural order of proceeding. Setting out with the conviction that it was moral truth of which they were in quest, they have made their whole investigation turn on the moral point of view, and have pursued the natural classification of moral facts only in subordination to this leading idea of their system. Hence, perhaps, the common opinion, which identifies Moral Philosophy with Ethical and Religious Truth. Thus, we find even so wise a philosopher as Dugald Stewart, who embraces the whole science of the Human Mind under the

head of Moral Philosophy, stating it as “ the object of Moral Philosophy to ascertain the general rules of a wise and virtuous conduct in life.” He states, indeed, what is true as to the *ultimate* object of Moral Science. But, to commence our inquiries with such an object immediately before us, is to enter prematurely on the study of ultimate principles. Our first concern is duly to investigate what the moral principles are, and to digest these into order. After that we have discovered what these laws are in themselves, throughout the whole range of Humanity, we shall then adequately enter on the investigation of the rules of conduct—the *leges legum*—the principles which preside over, and control, and limit, the apparent disorder and wildness and multiplicity of moral facts.

The error of commencing with inquiry into the moral principles in themselves, is like that of the ancients, in commencing their Natural Philosophy with Metaphysics; and may be illustrated by the latter, as a parallel case. Employing their thoughts in investigating the ultimate principles of the human mind, the ancients felt themselves in possession of a key to the interpretation of nature, without the trouble of analysing observed

phenomena, and rested, accordingly, in an hypothetical knowledge of nature. The same is the impression given to the moral inquirer, by fixing his attention, in the first instance, on the *end* of his studies, the knowledge of the rules of conduct. He is led to think that moral philosophy is an *à priori* knowledge, that its ultimate truths are the primary elements by which he is to give a meaning to all the moral facts which he observes. By such a restriction of the business of moral science, he may, indeed, become a moralist; but he comparatively sinks the character of the philosopher. He may discourse eloquently of the duties of man, as his own nature, instinctive with a wisdom which he has not regularly sought, may suggest to him the truth. But he has no proper command of the various powers, which a preliminary study of the human heart in all its outgoings unfolds. He has not explored what pleases or pains, what amuses or annoys, what appeases or ruffles, what attracts or alienates, what inspires with hope or dejects with fear, such a being as man is: and his moral system, therefore, may be perfect, as a collection of precepts, and practical observations, but it has no deep foundation, so far, at least, as

he knows, in the *natural* principles of moral truth.

To commence, then, at the commencement, I observe, that the first business of the Moral Philosopher is, to inquire into human nature as it is actually found. He has to investigate the principles according to which men act—the motives which influence them in fact,—the objects at which they commonly aim,—the passions, desires, characters, manners, tastes, which appear in the world around him, and in his own constitution. Further, as in all moral actions, the intellectual principles are implicated with the feelings, he must extend his inquiry to the phenomena of the mental powers, and know both what they are in themselves, and how they are combined in action with the feelings.

Consider, then, how large and rich a field of knowledge is here open to the student of Moral Philosophy. The studies to which he is called are the root out of which grows all sound and true history, all persuasiveness of eloquence, and, in short, the charm of whatever convinces the judgment or captivates the fancy. All, indeed, that is thought or done by man in the world, his researches in science, his inventions in art, his industry, his wit, his

tastes, his reasonings,—in whatever way he has stamped an image of himself on the world,—all comes under the survey of the moral philosopher: all is convertible into aliment of speculation for him.

According to this estimate, we should justly include within the pale of Moral Philosophy many sciences, which, at the first glance, might not seem to belong to it,—such as Rhetoric, Poetry, Logic. I do not mean to say that no one could be considered as a moral philosopher, unless he combined, within the sphere of his own knowledge, these particular sciences. I speak only of the labourers in each department required to fulfil the whole mission of Moral Philosophy; each of whom, by bringing in his contribution from his own particular region of exertion, both augments the amount of moral science, and furnishes materials out of which the moralist, properly so called—he that studies the principles of morality purely as they are moral, may correct, and establish, and enlarge his conclusions. The more, of course, that any individual knows of the various moral sciences, the more fully instructed will he be in that wisdom which he has undertaken to search out; the more power will he acquire for investigating

the rules of conduct. For the tie which binds together these several acquisitions is even stronger than that which unites the physical sciences : since these all bear together on one restricted subject, Man, with a direct reference : whereas the physical sciences are related in their results, but differ greatly in the subjects on which they are respectively engaged. But what I am now intent on showing is, that the various sciences to which I have referred may be legitimately classed among the moral sciences—on this principle ; that, in order to investigate duly the moral principles *as such*, the whole nature of man, considered as a principle of Activity, must be explored beforehand.

Proceeding on this principle, I should place the science of Humanity ; what, for want of an exact name, is commonly termed, from its partial exemplification, the Philosophy of History, as the first and most indispensable knowledge to the moral student,—the History of Man, that is, whether collected from observation or from books, reduced to the principles of human conduct, which it illustrates : and when I say history, I mean the history, not only of events and actions, but of opinions, of philosophy, of literature, of civilization

in general. I characterise this as a separate science, distinct from Ethics, because its business is, simply to observe what principles of conduct *exist*, and not the *rules* of conduct, which are the province of Ethics. It is clear that there are these two modes of observing human life. Either we may contemplate how man acts, noticing what principles appear in his behaviour; how they are connected together; how they are modified by circumstances. Or we may study these principles, with a view to influence the conduct of men. It is this last study only which is ethical: the former is simply philosophical observation on human life. Under the former head, for instance, would be placed the whole theory of the Passions. Take, for example, the exact and beautiful delineations of them given by Aristotle in his treatise of Rhetoric. He might, we are apt to suppose, have inserted these discussions in his Ethics. But he has not done so: and observe the reason why he has included them in the Rhetoric rather than in the Ethics. In the Ethics, he is elaborating rules of conduct: he is looking, accordingly, not to the passions as they are physically exemplified, but to that state of them in which they conspire to the *ends* of nature; where they cease consequently

to be mere physical emotions, and are moulded into moral principles. Under such a point of view, the passions, *as passions*, as facts in the general history of man's nature, are rejected from the census of the moralist. They are the mere phenomena of our sensibility; and are no indications, therefore, of the truth of our moral nature in themselves, but only as they are displayed in actions, or are modified by some exertion of human activity. In the rigour of his method, therefore, fixing his eye exclusively on the "work" of man, and seizing the principles of conduct at the point where they are found "executing that work well;"^a Aristotle avoids digressing from the truths proper to his science to a class of facts which, however curious and interesting in themselves, are neutral and barren in this respect. But in his Rhetoric, in which he is not concerned with the truth and the right of conduct, but with the mere phenomena of human behaviour, he consistently

^a Τάχα δὴ γένοιτ' ἂν τοῦτο, εἰ ληφθείη τὸ ἔργον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὥσπερ γὰρ ἀνλητῇ, καὶ ἀγαλματοποιῷ, καὶ παντὶ τεχνίτῃ, καὶ ὅλως ὧν ἐστὶν ἔργον τι καὶ πρᾶξις, ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ δοκεῖ τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι καὶ τὸ εὖ· εἴπερ ἐστὶ τι ἔργον αὐτοῦ.—*Ethic. Nic.* I. 7.

Ῥητέον οὖν, ὅτι πᾶσα ἀρετὴ, οὗ ἂν ἡ ἀρετὴ, αὐτό τε εὖ ἔχον ἀποτελεῖ, καὶ ἔργον αὐτοῦ εὖ ἀποδίδωσιν.—*Ibid.* II. 6.

takes up the inquiry into the passions, and treats it with the accuracy and fulness of inductive science. I do not, however, by any means, find fault with modern ethical writers, for having introduced discussions of the passions into their treatises. Only, the more rigorous method of Aristotle may show the difference which I have pointed out, between the general Philosophy of Human Nature, and the restricted science of Ethics.

Observe, further, for example, the different manner in which the feelings of Compassion and Resentment are treated by Butler and by Aristotle. In Aristotle, you find the actual forms of these passions sketched out; their objects, or occasions, the persons apt to feel them, as well as those towards whom they are felt, distinctly characterised. His design is to give a general description of them; to state the laws of their operation in the ordinary circumstances of human life. He omits, accordingly, all consideration of their tendencies; whether they are duly exerted or not, perfectly or imperfectly displayed, forms no part of his inquiry. But in Butler, whilst these passions are depicted in operation, the discussion takes quite a different form. Their final causes or tendencies are chiefly placed before our view.

We contemplate them, according to his mode of treating them, as parts of the whole human constitution; as they accomplish the good of the individual man and of society. Compassion is exhibited as it tends to the relief of misery; Resentment, as it tends to the prevention of injury and injustice. We read in the pages of Aristotle what these passions *are*; how they work as instincts: in Butler, what they *ought to be*; and how they may influence the conduct as moral principles. The former is the preliminary study: it is, as I before remarked, to read correctly the moral facts on which we have to speculate. But, in order to moralize on them, we must proceed to the second inquiry: otherwise we rest simply in a knowledge of the nature of the passions—a knowledge highly interesting and important in itself, but to the moralist or ethical student, only subordinate and introductory to his higher philosophy.

Observe, further, in illustration of the same point, in Aristotle himself, the difference of his manner in treating of the Virtues, when he sets them forth in his *Ethics* as laws of right conduct, and when he is simply characterising them in his *Rhetoric* as principles by which men are commonly actuated. In his

ethical delineations of them, he is constantly referring them to their final cause; he considers under what modification they are as they ought to be; in what form they combine with one another, and together tend to the perfection of human nature. In the Rhetoric, they appear as the world ordinarily views them; as the means of procuring the advantages of life, without reference to their intrinsic worth. In the former, Magnanimity is the highest Virtue; because it is all the virtues heightened and adorned by their combination in the noblest nature. In the latter, Justice, Courage, Liberality, bear pre-eminence; because these are obviously the most useful to the world.

From what I have observed in regard to the general Philosophy of Human Nature, it may be seen why I include Rhetoric and Poetics among the Moral Sciences. Both these sciences have their foundation in the active nature of man. Wherever they succeed in their effect,—rhetoric in persuading, and the poetic art in delighting,—there is assuredly in the artist, though often unconsciously exercised, a knowledge of those chords of the human heart which he touches: and it is the

part of the philosopher to detect the mode by which the successful effect has been produced, and reduce his observations on it to system. Disjoined, indeed, from a study of human nature, these arts become mere literary elegancies, the amusements of the refined, but frivolous and morbid taste; such as they are found in the decline of the Roman Empire, when all free and masculine philosophy was gone. No one who has duly studied the Rhetoric of Aristotle, or Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, can hesitate to rank a science, so conceived and interpreted, among the most important vehicles of moral information. Aristotle, indeed, does not profess, in his treatise of Rhetoric, to be searching out truth. Carrying on the same tone of thought with which Plato attacks the sophistical rhetoric of his day, he treats the whole art as a condescension to human infirmity, rather than a knowledge of truths; as addressed to opinion, and not a scientific method.^b He was aware that, in point of logical and ethical truth, Rhetoric was defective; being neither an exact discipline of argument, nor indeed a theoretic knowledge of any particular subject; and

^b "Ολης ούσης πρὸς δόξαν τῆς πραγματείας τῆς περὶ τὴν ῥητορικὴν.—*Aristot. Rhet.* III. c. 1.

he accordingly speaks of Rhetoric in terms which seem to disparage its dignity.^c But when we examine his treatise with our own notion of science, we can easily see that his objections to placing it on that footing, are not more valid against it, than against any other system not built on definitions. We can perceive that the knowledge of human nature which it contains is just and true, and fully entitles, therefore, such an inquiry to the rank of a Moral Science.

Had the Poetics of Aristotle descended to us entire, we should probably have had as full an illustration of the moral character of the science of Poetry, as we have of that of the orator in his Rhetoric. As the work remains, however, it sufficiently declares the philosophical nature of the principles on which the poetic imitation is founded. This is expressly referred to in his acute observation; that

^c "Ἐτι δ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται περὶ αὐτῶν διορίσαι κατὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, οὐ δεῖ κατὰ τὸν παρόντα καιρὸν ζητεῖν, διὰ τὸ μήτε τῆς ῥητορικῆς εἶναι τέχνης, ἀλλ' ἐμφρονεστέρας καὶ μᾶλλον ἀληθινῆς . . . ὅσῳ δ' ἂν τις ἢ τὴν διαλεκτικὴν, ἢ ταύτην, μὴ καθάπερ ἂν δυνάμεις, ἀλλ' ἐπιστήμας, πειρᾶται κατασκευάζειν, λήσεται τὴν φύσιν αὐτῶν ἀφανίσας, τῷ μεταβαίνειν ἐπισκευάζων εἰς ἐπιστήμας ὑποκειμένων τινῶν πραγμάτων, ἀλλὰ μὴ μόνον λόγων.—*Aristot. Rhet. I. c. 4.*

“ Poetry is more philosophical and excellent than History.”^d For the poet, he adds in explanation, describes not simply events that “ have happened, but such as might have happened;” that is, not mere singular phenomena, but such as fall under some general principle of human conduct. If, indeed, the object of the poet be to please by imitation, it is evident that this effect will not be accomplished, unless he represents general facts. He may please certain individuals, and accidentally, by imitating what has happened to those individuals to feel or observe. But he will not please mankind at large, unless he brings before them what men have generally felt and observed in the course of the world. The character of his imitation, therefore, implies a power of generalizing—

^d Ἀλλὰ τούτῳ διαφέρει, τῷ τὸν μὲν τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οἷα ἦν γένοιτο. διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας ἐστίν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἡ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει.—*Poetic*. 9.

Τῶν γὰρ γενομένων ἔνια οὐδὲν κωλύει τοιαῦτα εἶναι οἷα ἂν εἰκὸς γενέσθαι καὶ δυνατὰ γενέσθαι, καθ' ὃ ἐκεῖνος αὐτῶν ποιητής ἐστιν.—*Ibid*.

Προαιρεῖσθαι τε δεῖ ἀδύνατα εἰκότα μᾶλλον ἢ δυνατὰ ἀπίθανα.—*Ibid*. c. 24.

Plato expresses the same thing as a precept of the ancient rhetoricians:—Οὐδὲ γὰρ αὖ τὰ πραχθέντα δεῖν λέγειν ἐνίοτε, εἰ μὴ εἰκότως ἢ πεπρωμένα.—*Phædr.* p. 376.

of seeing the point of resemblance among different events, and reproducing it in his descriptions. There is more of this effort of the mind required on the part of the Historian, than perhaps appeared in that period of historical literature, when Aristotle made the remark to which I have alluded. But without deciding on the justness of this comparison, it is clear that the poet must be in the strictest sense a moralist; and that Homer was not more describing Ulysses than himself, in saying,

Πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα, καὶ νόον ἔγνω.

The remark may be extended to all the Fine Arts. Or, to state it generally, there is a science of Criticism, a genuine branch of Moral Philosophy, common to them all, and to which they all owe their excellence. Thus would treatises of the Sublime and Beautiful come into our province, and such discussions as the celebrated Discourses on Painting of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Whether Logic should properly be considered among the sciences which belong to Moral Philosophy may admit of a doubt, when we look to the purely intellectual character

of the science : whether we understand by the term, the logic of the schools, the science of reasoning by the signs of language, or extend it to the larger more pregnant method, the Analysis of modern scientific investigation. I include, however, these studies, purely intellectual as they are, within the pale of Moral Philosophy, in the same manner in which I include the study of the principles of the Fine Arts. As they are pursued in themselves, and in order to their perfection as distinct systems, they lead you away from the proper track of the moral philosopher. By such studies you become rhetoricians, or critics, or logicians, or painters, as the case may be, not moral philosophers in the general sense of the term. The more exactly that any one of these is cultivated on its own account, the more will the student erect it into a science distinct from his general pursuit. It is in their principles and in their relations, that they concern the moral philosopher. His is the mother science from which they all originate, and to which they owe a filial tribute of nurture and support.

To point out the connexion of the principles of the higher Logic, the method of Induction, with the science of Actions, I must call your attention to the process of deliberation which

takes place previously to every action. When any action is to be done, the mind of the agent proceeds in the examination of it step by step; rejecting this expedient, approving that; “searching out and analysing, as it were, a diagram” (such is the illustration given by Aristotle)^c; until at length it traces up the means of performance to itself; and this point being reached, the action immediately commences where the process of inquiry ends. Now the scientific method of investigation taught in the *Organum* of Bacon, is nothing more than an expansion and systematic arrangement of the principles exemplified in this process, so far as they admit of being generally stated.

Again, every action admits of being analysed into—1. The End chosen. 2. The Means pursued. 3. The Act itself performed. Of these constituents the first two correspond with the premises of a syllogism, the last with the conclusion. Hence an action has been considered by Aristotle under the form of a practical syllogism.^f The moral principle on

^c *Ethic. Nic.* III. c. 3.

^f See *Ethic. Nic.* VII. c. 3. *De Anima* III. c. 11.

See also a statement of this in Bishop Taylor's *Ductor Dubit.* I. c. 1. *Works*, 8vo. vol. xi. p. 383.

which we act in each instance, is here what logicians call the *major premiss*. It may, or may not, be conceived in the mind of the agent, in the form of a proposition. It may be simply the moral condition of his feelings on the occasion ;—the mere wish to do justly, the love of the right, the honourable, the prudent ; or the contrary, if the character be vicious. This is what we unconsciously refer to, when we speak of a man's moral principles. The purity and elevation, the extent and strength, of it, depend on, and are tests of, the degree of moral cultivation which the individual has attained. Then follows, in combination with this principle, a judgment at the moment of action, of the particular mode of behaviour by which this principle is to be put into effect. Here lies the exercise of what we call *discretion*. This judgment represents the *minor premiss* of the practical syllogism : and immediately consequent on it is the *conclusion*, the act itself. All this takes place coinstantaneously ; and the process escapes the notice of the agent by its rapidity. Still it is a real process. And that there are these several elements in it, may be perceived from those instances in which we find one of them more prominent than the others,

and giving its tone to the action. Some, for example, we find of right moral character; having, that is, sound and good principles, but wanting the ready discernment to apply them in action. Whilst others again display a practical dexterity of judgment, a kind of moral tact, being able at the moment to discern the right mode of acting, *αὐτοσχεδιάζειν τὰ δεόντα*, as Thucydides happily expresses it, but have no large, or pure, or stable principle.^s Both cases thus, the former through defect of practical judgment, the latter through defect of right principles, fail in attaining sound moral conclusions, and in realizing that result which the Greek language beautifully characterized by the term *εὐπραξία*, success and good conduct going hand-in-hand.^h There are others again who evince a readiness in action, without either stability of principle or sharpness of judgment; like hasty reasoners drawing conclusions at random, acting sometimes on this principle, sometimes on that, sometimes prudently, sometimes imprudently; always in the field of action, yet

^s This is the quality which Aristotle denotes by *δεινότης*. See *Ethic. Nic. VI. c. ult.*

^h The whole of the 6th and 7th Books of Aristotle's *Ethics* should be studied in illustration of this.

never advancing in moral culture or moral ability.

For the full development, therefore, of the theory of Action, the process of the reasoning conscience ought to be studied, no less than the feelings or purely emotive part of our nature. We ought to be able to untwist those threads by which the intellectual and moral principles are curiously twined together in all our moral sentiments and conduct, and to acquire a skill in detecting both the right reason and the sophistry of the heart.

To the student, indeed, of Ancient Philosophy, a knowledge of the Logic of the Schools is peculiarly important. It is indispensable, I should say, to an understanding of the views and arguments of the Greek philosophers. Take the Ethics alone of Aristotle; and how many things must occur to you there quite unintelligible, until, by some acquaintance at least with the nomenclature of the ancient Dialectics, you can account for their introduction into such a treatise.ⁱ In truth, to direct you to

ⁱ The 6th Chapter of the 1st Book of the Ethics, in which Plato's Ideal theory is discussed with reference to the question of the Chief Good, in itself requires a very considerable knowledge of the ancient Dialectics, in order to be rightly understood.

the study of Ancient Philosophy, is to require you to become acquainted with the ancient Dialectics. The two studies run up into each other. To pursue either properly, you must digress (if it is to digress) into the other. I may add also, scarcely can a knowledge be obtained of many questions which have been derived to modern science from the ancient schools, without an initiation into their Logic. I am certainly not out of order, therefore, at least in this Lecture-room, in assigning a place to Logic, among the affiliated sciences of Moral Philosophy.

I shall not require many words to assert the claims of Politics on the student of Moral Science,—Politics, as including the sciences of Laws, and Government, and Wealth. No one will hesitate for a moment to attribute a moral character to the truths of Politics. However far we may pursue these, we do not appear to overstep the limits of Moral Philosophy: for they begin and end with information concerning the actions of men. What is required more, in regard to this branch of science, is to apprehend clearly the characteristic of political principles in contrast with ethical. By the ancients the

two classes of principles were confounded: for they laid down the same Chief Good as the one object at once of political and ethical science.^k Their theory of a perfect polity is that system of government in which Virtue is the law of the State, or where the good man is identical with the good citizen. The result which their theory contemplated must be admitted to be true, if we refer it to the Divine Government; but however noble in the conception, is altogether hypothetical, if we would seek to effect it by mere human institutions. Only in the miraculous fact of the Jewish Theocracy has the world witnessed an example of such a result; and to accomplish the like in another instance would require the like exertion of Omniscience, and a like extraordinary Providence.

Let it be observed then how the phenomena of Political Science differ from those of Ethics. In the political actions of men, we find them rewarding and punishing in a different manner from that which is seen in their ethical judgments. For instance, the greatest political offences are those to which there is the greatest temptation. But in the ethical point

^k See Aristotle's *Ethics*, I. c. 2. V. c. 2. *Polit.* III. c. 4.

of view, it is just the reverse: crimes to which the temptation is the greatest, obtain the most indulgent consideration.¹ Advantages obtained with the least sacrifice, are most estimated by the politician; whereas the greater the sacrifice, the greater the meritoriousness of a conquest, in the eye of the moralist. Prescriptive rights, though originating in wrong and violence, are maintained by political law; whilst the moral law admits no right within its domain which has ever had any contact with wrong. In general, indeed, it will be found that political phenomena are instances of the working of man's Activity, not as it is in itself, but under the constraint of particular circumstances, and for a particular restricted object. In these, human activity is seen operating, not for its own perfection, not to accomplish the virtue and happiness of our nature, but for the security and improvement of the social union. Expediency to this end is the great principle of

¹ In reference to the law of Pittacus, imposing double penalties on crimes committed under the influence of drunkenness, Aristotle observes:—διὰ γὰρ τὸ πλείους ὑβρί-
ζειν μεθύοντας ἢ νήφοντας, οὐ πρὸς τὴν συγγνώμην ἀπέβλεψεν,
ὅτι δεῖ μεθύουσιν ἔχειν μᾶλλον, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον.—
Polit. 11. c. 10.

political facts. In ethical inquiry, the strength of the internal principle in the agent is what we are concerned to discover and enforce. But in the political view, individual acts are the objects of attention; no respect being had to the principle of the agent, further than as it occasions positive acts of benefit or injury to society.

It is in the sound and large observation of this expediency that political science properly consists. For, though regards for the welfare of society do not originally bring men together, but the effect is due to the philanthropic instincts of our nature; yet when societies are once formed, reason devises the means by which their advantages may be secured and extended, and their evils averted or diminished. To accomplish this purpose accordingly, observations are collected on institutions, and governments, and laws; and these are drawn into principles for the preservation of the social order. Thus the constitution of a perfect society becomes in itself an end of political inquiry; or where the attainment of such an end is impracticable, and the attempt to effect it would be injurious, the next point is, to ascertain those principles by which an existing constitution may be best maintained and

improved. The former was the ambitious pursuit of the ancient philosophers and legislators; the latter is the more temperate and just profession of modern political science.

These remarks may suffice to show the characteristic of Political Science, as it is a distinct branch of Moral Philosophy; and furnish you with a hint (which is all that I can attempt here) for entering on your inquiries under this head with a more steady aim.

From this very rapid and imperfect sketch of the principal departments of knowledge, which send in their respective tribute to the treasury of Moral Science; and which, as I have shown, may all thus far be regarded as belonging to our studies;—I come now to the more intimate recesses of Moral Philosophy—to the point, where taking up the truths as already gathered from our various researches, we proceed to consider them in themselves, and explore, as I may say, the *morality* of moral truth.

To this point of inquiry the description of Moral Philosophy, as the science of what *ought to be*, appropriately refers. Even where

moral facts are concerned, the study of nature is exhausted, when we have fully discovered *what really is*. We have no means of solving the question, whether the laws of Divine Government might have been better, or whether they have been established in the best possible way in which they could be. We must acquiesce here, as in the material constitution of things, in what we *find*; and such acquiescence is our highest moral wisdom, as in regard to the material universe, it is our highest natural philosophy. It argues only ignorance and folly, to scan the course and constitution of the world by the measures of an imaginary optimism; and the attempt cannot but end in disappointment and absurdity. As Butler well observes, after Origen, who has expressed the same thought,^m it is probable that the plan which such theorists would fix upon, would not, after all, be found “the very best, even according to their own

^m Καὶ τοῦτο δὲ δοκεῖ μοι ὅμοιον εἶναι τῷ λόγῳ τῶν ἀντιδιατασσόντων τῇ προνοίᾳ, καὶ διαγραφόντων ἑαυτοῖς ἕτερα παρὰ τὰ ὄντα, καὶ λεγόντων, ὅτι βέλτιον ἦν εἰ οὕτως εἶχεν ὁ κόσμος, ὥς διεγράψαμεν· ὅπου μὲν γὰρ δυνατὰ διαγράφουσιν, ἐλέγχονται χεῖρονα ποιοῦντες, τὸ ὅσον ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῖς καὶ τῇ διαγραφῇ αὐτῶν, τὸν κόσμον· ὅπου δὲ δοκοῦσι μὴ χεῖρονα ἀναζωγραφεῖν τῶν ὄντων, ἀποδείκνυνται τὰ τῇ φύσει ἀδύνατα βουλόμενοι· ὥς ἐκατέρως αὐτοὺς καταγελάστους εἶναι.—*Orig. c. Cels. II. p. 102. ed. 4to.*

notions of Best :” so adventurous and futile is such a speculation, not only in regard to “ the laws of Nature respecting inanimate matter,” but also as applied to “ the conduct of Nature with respect to intelligent creatures.”ⁿ But in the search after pure moral truth, no inquiry is more appropriate ; as I have already endeavoured to show in a former Lecture. It is here indeed the life and soul of the whole investigation. The science of Morality is, *by its very nature*, a science of the Best. All our observations on human life indicate the operation of various principles of man’s nature exerted under every capricious form, but all aiming, directly or indirectly, at some supposed good. This is the great moral fact in which they all agree. These aims are found often foolish, and perverse, and blind, and frustrate. Still there is good in the view of the agent. Is it possible then to reach that good, to grasp it in the terms of a theory, to delineate and express the Best, and so to reduce into order the chaos of facts which the moral world presents?^o

ⁿ Butler’s Analogy, *Introduction*.

^o The 1st chapter of Aristotle’s *Ethics* states this fact. In the 2d and following chapters of the 1st book, he states and discusses the *object* of ethical theory as a search after “ the Best.” The rest of the work fills up his sketch of that object.

Such, then, is the object proposed to the Moral Philosopher on his own proper ground. Under this point of view, his studies fall into two great classes:—1st. The Theory of the Moral Sentiments. 2dly. The Theory of Natural Religion.

I. The Theory of the Moral Sentiments results from the consideration of man himself as the *Subject* of moral action; as the internal theatre on whose stage the drama of life is acted.

II. The Theory of Natural Religion results from considering the *Object*, or end, to which the moral nature of man has reference,—being a speculation into the ultimate tendency or destination of the moral sentiments,—into the “final causes” themselves, in which our present capacities of virtue and happiness receive their consummation and perfection.

In the systems of the ancients, these two inquiries were blended in that great question of their philosophy, What is the Chief Good? There, unfortunately for their search after truth,—unfortunately, on account of the influence which the speculation has had on Christian theology, — Metaphysics usurped the place of Natural Religion—indeed were recognized by them under the express name of

Theology. Yet it seems they had an indistinct perception of the true connexion of Religion with Moral Truth, when they wearied themselves so importunately to find out the “Chief Good” as a basis of their moral theories. Their thoughts, however, being wholly trained in the *à priori* method of speculation, they erroneously endeavoured to seize, at the very outset, the ultimate object of the moral sentiments; and to define the nature of Goodness itself, in order to deduce from it, as the one universal principle, the particular rules of good conduct.^p Thus they confounded the *subjective* part of morality with the *objective*. They sacrificed the independence of the Theory of the Moral Sentiments, while they deviated into paths which led to Religion; and yet did not pursue those paths to the point in which they converged and terminated.^q

^p Even according to Aristotle, the attainment of happiness is the attainment of a *divine* principle:—‘*Ἡμῶν δὲ δῆλον ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων, ὅτι ἐστὶν ἡ εὐδαιμονία τῶν τιμῶν καὶ τελείων.*” *Ἐοικε δ’ οὕτως ἔχειν, καὶ διὰ τὸ εἶναι ἀρχὴν ταύτης γὰρ χάριν τὰ λοιπὰ πάντες πάντα πράττομεν*” τὴν ἀρχὴν δὲ καὶ τὸ αἴτιον τῶν ἀγαθῶν, τίμιόν τι καὶ θεῖον τίθεμεν.—*Ethic. Nic. I. c. 12.* But the same more expressly appears from the concluding chapters of his *Metaphysics*.

^q This confusion seems the foundation of Bacon’s remark, that “moral philosophy was to the pagans in the stead of theology.” — *Nov. Org. I. 79.* *Metaphysics* were their

It is most important, then, that you should clearly distinguish the two heads of speculation, on the ground on which I have stated them as distinct: the Theory of the Moral Sentiments, as an inquiry into man's moral nature regarded as the *Subject* of those sentiments: the Theory of Natural Religion, as an inquiry into the whole ultimate *Object* of that moral nature. But this requires to be further explained.

That the two inquiries are really distinct, may appear thus. When we analyse our moral sentiments, we find two principles contained in them:—I. A Motive, an internal spring, as we may call it, the origin of the sentiment—that without which it could not so much as come into existence. II. An End, or Object, towards which the exertion of the sentiment is made—something that awakens and calls it into action—without which, again, however perfect the internal machinery may be, the moral sentiment could not exist as a sentiment, would only be *passive*, and never exert the force of an *active* principle.

proper theology; but moral philosophy engaged their minds in discussions and controversies similar to, and in some points the same as, those which Theology has now engrossed to itself. It also supplied the material for their division into sects.

They differ, as the spring and wheels of a watch differ from the pointing of the hour; being mutually related in like manner. You will find these two principles accurately distinguished throughout Aristotle's Ethics, and expressly, where he says; "the principle of action is choice; the *motive*, that is, but not the *end*; but of choice the principle is appetite (activity) and reason for the sake of some end:"¹ reason, he means, not in the general sense of the term, but practical reason; reason employed about some particular object.

Both principles, the Motive and the End, are equally necessary constituents of every action, of every moral sentiment. They are no other than the two principles before noticed in the ancient theory of Causation,—the Motive Cause and the Final Cause,—applied to the subject of Human Actions.

Now though it is impossible to divorce, in fact, the idea of the one from that of the other, yet the two principles are distinctly apprehended, and admit, therefore, of being made the matter of separate scientific consideration. What though if even in the

¹ Πράξεως μὲν οὖν ἀρχή, προαίρεσις, ὅθεν ἡ κίνησις, ἀλλ' οὐχ οὗ ἕνεκα· προαιρέσεως δὲ, ὁρεξις καὶ λόγος ὁ ἕνεκά τινος.
Ethic. Nic. VI. c. 2.

scientific consideration of each, we are obliged to take also the other into our view ; still this would not destroy the subjective character of the one inquiry, or the objective one of the other. It will be admitted that we cannot study the motive principles, without comprising in our view the objects of the moral sentiments ; or, on the other hand, these objects, without passing the various sentiments in themselves under review. Still our attention in each case is fixed on the class of phenomena proper to our immediate inquiry ; and we extend our view to the other class, in order to obtain information about those which we are examining. Thus, suppose that I were inquiring into the particular nature of the moral sentiment of Courage, my direct purpose would be to ascertain the motive principles of our nature which go to the formation of this moral sentiment—whether a feeling of honour or resentment, or fear, and so forth, be constituents in it, and what modification of each or all of them it may be. But I could not pursue such an inquiry without looking to the *objects* of Courage ; selecting the occasions which call it forth and display it in perfection, and rejecting from my estimate those which do not really belong to it.

For only in such circumstances shall I see the sentiment fully developed, and its genuine form exhibited. At the same time, I have no further concern with this tendency of the motive principles, this reaching forth of the hand of our moral feelings to grasp their own objects, than as it illustrates each sentiment in itself; by presenting it to me as it is active and energetic, and thus enabling me to characterize it according to its proper nature. So, on the other hand, were I to consider the objective character of our Moral Sentiments, I should be employed in collecting all the phenomena in which the great fact of a tendency in our moral nature to objects out of itself, is instanced. To collect a full evidence on this point, I should of course take a survey, as far as possible, of all the active principles. Still I should only interrogate them with a view to this particular point. I should only seek to extort from them a confession, that they are not content with themselves, but that pursuit, and tendency, and aiming, and reaching beyond themselves, are the very life which they live, the very soul which breathes into them all their activity.

But the first head of inquiry, as I have

said, terminates in purely ethical truth, the latter in religion.

In the first, accordingly, we ascertain the laws of action, the principles which ought to predominate in conduct, and the moral mechanism of our nature, by which those laws are established.

For let it not escape your notice, that in this the peculiar department of the moralist, the subjective head of investigation, there are two subordinate inquiries pursuing each its own track, as Adam Smith and others have shown.—I. The first is an inquiry into the *Nature* of Virtue, into the laws themselves in which right conduct consists. II. The second is the inquiry into the *Criterion* of Virtue; or the Principle of Approbation, as it is sometimes expressed; what it is that distinguishes right from wrong, that gives Virtue the sanction of a law; whether a moral faculty, reason, sympathy, taste, a conformity to truth, a sense of honour, a conviction of interest, and the like.

These inquiries are no less distinct, as ethical writers have observed, than the examination into the power of vision in the eye is distinct from the theory of light, or the qualities of any chemical ingredient are from the sense of

taste by which they are discriminated.^s In pursuing your studies, therefore, this distinction should ever be borne in mind. Undoubtedly, observations made under one head will illustrate the truths which you are seeking under the other. The theory of Virtue will take a very different colour, according as we adopt or reject, for instance, the doctrine of a moral faculty. Nor is it practicable, indeed, to pursue the study of one head without involving some theory on the other. In Aristotle, for instance, in whose Ethics we have no discussion of the principle of moral approbation, and in all the ancient systems which make the *καλόν* the right, we have the praise and blame of the world assumed as the criterion of right and wrong. To form the character to that exact propriety, that due indulgence of every affection in which he fixes the nature of Virtue, Aristotle would have his disciple train himself to the most delicate sensibility to the praise and blame of mankind. For that equilibrium of the affections which constitutes the virtuous character, is a thing which it is impossible to

^s Sir J. Mackintosh, on the Prog. of Ethic. Phil. *Prelim. Dissert. Encyc. Britan.* 7th edit. p. 298.

state in words, or comprise in any definition.¹ It varies infinitely for every individual person. The only limitation of it is the moral perception, which each man must acquire and improve by discipline; and that discipline, according to Aristotle, is found in a heart gradually becoming more and more alive to the voice of general approbation.² Thus the

¹ Δεῖ δ' αὐτοὺς αἰεὶ τοὺς πράττοντας τὰ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν σκοπεῖν.—*Ethic. Nic.* II. c. 2. 'Ο δὲ μέχρι τίνος καὶ ἐπὶ πόσον ψεκτός, οὐ ῥάδιον τῷ λόγῳ ἀφορίσαι· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄλλο οὐδὲν τῶν αἰσθητῶν· τὰ δὲ τοιαῦτα ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἕκαστα, καὶ ἐν τῇ αἰσθήσει ἢ κρίσει.—*Ibid.* c. ult. See also Book VI. c. 7.

² This observation results, in its full force, only from a comprehensive and exact survey of his whole ethical system. Observe, however, particularly how, in his sketches of the several virtues, he constantly refers you to *praise* (not the praise of any particular class of men, but of mankind at large), as the standard and limit of them. It appears expressly, in the following passages,—Τῶν ἔξεων δὲ τὰς ἐπαινετὰς ἀρετὰς λέγομεν.—*Ethic. Nic.* I. c. ult. Κατὰ μὲν τὰ πάθη οὐτ' ἐπαινούμεθα, οὔτε ψεγόμεθα· οὐ γὰρ ἐπαινέται ὁ φοβούμενος, οὐδὲ ὁ ὀργιζόμενος, ἀλλ' ὁ πῶς κατὰ δὲ τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ τὰς κακίας ἐπαινούμεθα ἢ ψεγόμεθα.—*Ibid.* II. c. 5. 'Η δὲ ἀρετὴ περὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις ἐστίν, ἐν οἷς ἢ μὲν ὑπερβολὴ ἀμαρτάνεται, καὶ ἢ ἑλλειψις ψέγεται, τὸ δὲ μέσον ἐπαινεῖται καὶ κατορθοῦται· ταῦτα δ' ἄμφω τῆς ἀρετῆς. *Ibid.* c. 6. "Οτι μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρετὴ ἢ ἠθικὴ μεσότης, . . . καὶ ὅτι τοιαύτη ἐστὶ διὰ τὸ στοχαστικὴ τοῦ μέσου εἶναι τοῦ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσι καὶ ταῖς πράξεσιν . . . Διὸ καὶ ἔργον ἐστὶ σπουδαῖον εἶναι . . . τὸ δὲ ῥᾶδιον, καὶ ὅσον, καὶ ὅτε, καὶ οὗ ἕνεκα, καὶ ὡς, οὐκ ἔτι παντός, οὐδὲ ῥάδιον· ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ εὖ, καὶ σπάνιον, καὶ ἐπαινέτον, καὶ καλόν.—*Ibid.* c. 9. "Ο γὰρ πᾶσι δοκεῖ τοῦτο

praise and blame of the world constitute his criterion of Virtue and Vice: though he has nowhere examined into the question itself as to what is truly the Criterion of Virtue. Nor, indeed, have any of the ancients. For this branch of inquiry peculiarly belongs to the modern school of Ethics; having grown out of the great question concerning the Origin of Ideas, which has so much exercised the ingenuity of modern speculation. But in order to obtain this mutual reflection of light from each department of investigation, it is absolutely necessary that you should never lose sight of the real difference, to which I have here adverted, between the two inquiries.

It remains then only for me to point out how what I have called the Objective head of Moral Philosophy, in contrast with the other, the Subjective, leads us to the conclusions of Natural Religion.

The consideration, then, of the tendency of the Moral Sentiments carries the mind forward to a belief of the existence of some ultimate objects of attainment, which may

εἶναι φάμεν.—Ibid. X. c. 2. Δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἥθος προϋπάρχειν πῶς οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς, στέργον τὸ καλὸν, καὶ ἐνσχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχρόν.—Ibid. c. 9.

realize that entire satisfaction after which we aspire, but which is evidently not to be reached by the utmost present fulfilment of the Moral Sentiments. Human life, when thus studied, stands conspicuously forth to our view as a *pursuit*, and not as an *end*. It does not come up to that standard which the Moral Sentiments instinctively and irresistibly frame to themselves. How is this fact, then, to be met, in all the manifold phenomena from which it results; how is it to be solved in any one instance;—but by the notion of a God, as our supreme and final Good, by whom all our instincts of good shall be perfected; and by the notion also of a better world, in which all our moral yearnings shall be satisfied? To illustrate this whole head of Moral Philosophy, I cannot do better than refer you to the admirable “Analogy” of Bishop Butler. That work is throughout an exemplification of this mode of philosophizing. It takes up our moral principles where the world leaves them, and conceives them expanded to their perfection and glory in the more immediate presence of the great Moral Governor of the world. Let the work be read with this view, as a divine philosophy of the Moral Sentiments; and you will derive from it

a conviction at once of the substantial reality of this branch of Moral Philosophy, and of the religious knowledge to which it conducts the inquirer.

To explain this application of the work by an example. That we are to live hereafter in a purer state of being, in which our capacities of virtue and happiness shall be perfected, where danger shall cease in security, and perfect love shall cast out fear,—what is this, but to consider in themselves the final causes of those various Moral Sentiments by which the heart of man is actuated? The occasions which call forth our sentiments here, the present objects on which they are exercised, may no longer exist; but the good to which those temporary objects or occasions evidently minister, is something beyond those objects or occasions themselves, something that is not destroyed by destroying them.^x We must, therefore, conceive that good still to exist.

^x Aristotle overlooked this difference between the good effected by the exertion of a moral sentiment, and the *immediate* object, or occasion, of the sentiment; (though he was perfectly aware of it, as he shows by his account of Pleasure as an end distinct from the object from which it results, Ethics, X. c. 4,) when he excluded the ethical virtues from his heaven. See the passage in his Ethics, Πράξεις δὲ ποίας ἀπονείμμαι χρεὼν αὐτοῖς; κ.τ.λ. B. X. c. 8.

And we may consider it accordingly in itself. We may place it before our view as the final cause of those sentiments which lead to it, and examine our nature by the light reflected from it. When seen by this light, our nature assumes a nobler stature. We behold it as the workmanship of an invisible artificer, designing it for more than a temporary purpose; and we are irresistibly carried to believe ourselves immortal beings, sons of God, destined to rejoice for ever with our Father in heaven. All that this argument requires is, that the fact of these *tendencies* in our nature should be clearly established. The conclusion resulting from them as to a state of glorified existence hereafter with God, possesses as much evidence as any fact can, which is future, and of which there is no direct experience. It is drawn however strictly, it should be observed, from a consideration of *tendencies*, or *final causes*. We take into our view our present capacities of happiness, in order that we may see to what they tend. But they do not in themselves lead us to the conclusion. Looking, however, to their tendencies—to the ends to which they point,—we are carried out of the present ephemeral scene into the proper ground

of Religion, the sacred region in which Good prevails with undisputed ascendancy, and is all in all.

Particularly, however, to illustrate the fundamental principle of this head of inquiry, I must refer you to Butler's two sermons on the Love of God ; which more directly exhibit the view that I have here set before you of Natural Religion, as the offshoot and transcendental science of Moral Philosophy. He there points out how not only the particular affection of Love, but the affections in general of our nature, as reverence, joy, fear, love of honour, when referred to their ultimate objects, to *ends* in which they *rest*, obtain their adequate completion in the goodness, and wisdom, and power of God.

I conclude with the following passages, from Butler, which present the nature of such an inquiry in a short compass.

“ All the common enjoyments of life are from the faculties he hath endued us with, and the objects he hath made suitable to them. He may himself be to us infinitely more than all these : he may be to us all that we want. As our understanding can contemplate itself, and our affections be exercised upon them-

selves by reflection, so may each be employed, in the same manner, upon any other mind: and since the supreme Mind, the Author and Cause of all things, is the highest possible object to himself, he may be an adequate supply to all the faculties of our souls; a subject to our understanding, and an object to our affections.”

“ When we speak of things so much above our comprehension as the employment and happiness of a future state, doubtless it behoves us to speak with all modesty and distrust of ourselves. But the Scripture represents the happiness of that state under the notions of ‘ seeing God,’ ‘ seeing him as he is,’ ‘ knowing as we are known,’ and ‘ seeing face to face.’ These words are not general or undetermined, but express a particular determinate happiness. And I will be bold to say, that nothing can account for, or come up to, these expressions, but only this, that God himself will be an object to our faculties, that he himself will be our happiness, as distinguished from the enjoyments of the present state, which seem to arise, not immediately from him, but from the objects he has adapted to give us delight.”^y

^y Butler, Sermon XIV. pp. 252, 258.

LECTURE VII.

I COME now to treat of the method in which Moral Philosophy should be studied. Having already pointed out the principles on which the science proceeds, and the various inquiries included under the general title of Moral Philosophy, I am naturally led to discuss the mode in which the study should be pursued.

This part of my subject divides itself into two general heads:—1st. The spirit, or posture of mind, with which we should enter on the investigation. 2dly. The intellectual process by which we shall most effectually reach the truth of which we are in quest. I shall consider each of these in order.

I. First, then, as to the spirit with which we should enter on such investigation;—I may appeal to the words of Aristotle, when he says, that he who is young in years, or is the slave of his passions, cannot be a proper hearer of

moral truth ; the young, he means, because such an one being deficient in experience, is not master of those principles collected from the knowledge of man on which the whole fabric of moral truth is built ; the slave of passion, because his judgment is perverted, and his inward eye obscured against the perception of what professes to search the heart and regulate the conduct. Candour, patience, docility, openness to conviction, modest attention to the wisdom of the experienced,^a a willingness to adopt conclusions practically, are accordingly indispensable requisites to him who would enter on this study profitably. Preconception whether of opinion or of passion, must equally be discarded. He that comes to the study with his prejudices fast rooted, is, in fact, already the philosopher of an adverse school. He has chosen his sect before he has asked which is true or which is false ; and he puts himself, therefore, out of the condition of a learner. He is prepared not to examine, but to combat ; not to accept what is true, but to defend what he already believes, or at least

^a Δεῖ προσέχειν τῷ ἐμπείρων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἢ φρονίμων ταῖς ἀναποδείκτοις φάσεσι καὶ δόξαις, οὐχ ἥττον τῶν ἀποδείξεων· διὰ γὰρ τοῦ ἔχειν ἐκ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ὄμμα, ὁρῶσι τὰς ἀρχάς.—*Aristot. Ethic. Nic. VI. c. 11.*

acts upon as true. This seems so obvious, as scarcely to require any further remark. It is yet, however, with all its reasonableness, the most difficult thing to carry into practice. It is no slight effort on the part even of those who most cherish a favourable disposition for moral inquiry ; and how much more for those who rush on the study with undisciplined ardour, with no due sense of the responsibility of the task they have undertaken ? What exhortation to a more temperate mode of proceeding can avail with such persons ? They require, indeed, self-chastisement more than argument. For those, however, who are ready to follow the truth wherever it may call them, who are disposed to philosophize in the genuine temper of the moral philosopher, it may be useful to dwell further on this subject, and consider more closely the relation which the character of the student has to the truth sought in moral inquiry.

It would be arguing in a circle, to say that only the virtuous are qualified to form a judgment on questions in which the laws of virtue are concerned. For who are the virtuous, except those whom the laws of virtue define to be such ? So that to presuppose a

character of virtue in an individual, is to presuppose in him a knowledge of those laws by which it is prescribed. It supposes, at least, that the character of the inquirer must correspond with what we may call virtuous; and our description of virtue may be erroneous. The question, therefore, stated in this form is objectionable. It may be stated, then, more generally, in a form to which no such objection applies: thus; our conclusions in moral subjects vary according to the state of our minds, according to the modification of character derived from feelings, and habits, and circumstances in the world.

In illustration of this point, it may be observed, that not only settled states of mind, but even accidental humour, excitement, or depression of the spirits, momentary passions, have their influence on our moral decisions. The mind, in such cases, gives only a half-hearing to the terms of a proposition, and draws its conclusion from the sense which passion supplies at the moment. Every one probably has felt this in his own case; has found that the same thing appears to him in very different lights at different times, according to the caprice of his feelings. The waverings of thought, as we deliberate on

any subject, are instances to the same effect. In such deliberations, we find ourselves with the same alternatives before our minds, at one time taking one conclusion, at another time another, as the alternatives of judgment meet with some counterpart in our feelings, and accordingly preponderate.

But to consider more direct cases, in which we come to the consideration of some speculative truth in moral subjects; in which, the conclusion being speculative abstract truth, it might seem that every intellect would perceive it in the same light. Here, however, we may also recognize the power of the moral character to intrude and disturb the judgment. Let us suppose the case of an argument relating to some controverted point of History, logically deduced and perspicuously stated; and let us suppose also this argument to be examined by two intellects of equal power. The logical force of the argument, consequently, will appear equally to both; if both are equally attentive to it, equally willing to accept the conclusion. Not otherwise, however. And where shall we find two minds, though of equal power, of the same temperament, exactly adjusted to each other? They may have been trained in the same school, disciplined by the

same exercise; yet, in going through this process of education, each mind has used its own liberty of thought, has dwelt on those associations of ideas which it liked, has followed out those trains of thought which most engaged it, has most frequently recurred to those principles and conclusions which accorded with its tastes. Hence no two minds, however equal in natural endowments, can ever come to the consideration of any subject, in which there is room for judgment, in the same attitude of thought. It is this fact, indeed, upon which the whole science of Rhetoric is founded: rhetorical science being the study and comprehensive view of those various influences which arguments have, according to the frame and temperament of the mind; a knowledge of the general principles according to which men admit conclusions on moral subjects, independently of the direct logical force of the arguments employed in them. Thus, though the historical fact be, in itself, a matter of indifference to each of the two minds before which it is presented, the probability is, that, either different views will be taken of it in the result; or that, if there is a coincidence of result, the elements of the proof, the actual grounds of credibility, will be different in the

two cases. The associations which the discussion awakens, the thoughts which it suggests, will be the determining principles in each case. The same thing will be found generally in regard to the study of any book: no two minds, perhaps, receive precisely the same impressions from it.

But let us further take a case in which some truth of morality itself is involved. Whatever theory of Virtue we may adopt, it is plain that the conclusions of two reasoners on the subject will differ, as their respective habits of feeling and acting differ in point of virtue and vice. I mean, that he who is the disciple of vice can never really judge of virtue with the eye of the virtuous man, nor the virtuous man contemplate vice as the vicious man does. The two qualities are mutually repugnant, and cannot coexist. This all must admit; however some may call virtue vice, and vice virtue. He that approves, therefore, what is vicious, will never approve what is virtuous, however cogently it may be enforced on him by argument, or recommended by the charms of a persuasive eloquence; and *vice versâ*. Any argument employed in teaching morality, must involve matter of feeling. Virtue and vice are founded on our sensibilities to right

and wrong; on the pleasure and pain which one kind of actions or another may produce in us. If a man had no feeling for one kind of action more than for another, there would be no room for moral address to such a person. He would indeed be the ἀχρήσιος ἄνθρωπος of the poet; an instance of one “maimed with respect to virtue,” as Aristotle describes it. Now every argument enforcing on us a duty, appeals ultimately to the feeling of each individual in regard to virtue. It does not, of course, presuppose that he is already fully alive to the whole force of the conclusion; for, if that were the case, no moral argument could avail to *instruct*: it could only confirm, and encourage, and revive existing convictions. But it does imply a disposition towards the truth so taught. Let us suppose an endeavour to enforce the duty of universal benevolence on an individual; as in the instance of our Lord’s conversation with the young man, when he added, “Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor.” The person so addressed “went away sorrowful,” we are told, “for he had great possessions.” Was it that the precept was unreasonable—that it was not a sound conclusion, that he who had much should give to him who had nothing? It was that the

deceitfulness of riches had blinded his eyes, had attracted his affections to themselves, and deadened in his heart the philanthropic instinct. Otherwise, hard as the precept was to execute to the letter, he would not have turned away at once from the admonition, but would have stayed, at least, to ask an explanation,—to seek some further guidance for a weak but willing heart. From the analysis, indeed, to which I have already referred of an action into the practical reasoning of which it consists, it appears, that a mere intellectual power may enable a man to see the *means* of conduct in order to an end, but not to discern the *right*. The intellectual power is neutral; it may equally direct to wrong and to right; that it may carry us to right, there must be a principle of right in the heart. It is this which transforms a mere knowledge of the world—mere worldly prudence—into a virtuous judgment. Our capacity of moral improvement proceeds on this element of moral feeling. We go on enlarging our principle, as we repeat, and strengthen, and extend our moral judgments in each particular case of right conduct, until at length we attain to a more perfect wisdom in the regulation of our lives. Or, on the other hand, by neglecting to cultivate our

moral judgment — by looking more to the means of acting than to the principle on which we act—we diminish the scope of our moral feelings, and gradually almost extinguish them. In the latter case, we cease to *discern* between good and evil; as in the former we improve our moral discernment. Agreeably to this, Butler observes, in regard to Religion, that the question is not, whether the evidence of it is sufficient to convince the understanding; but whether it is sufficient to cultivate and discipline that temper of mind which it presupposes.^b As a moral subject, it demands to be appreciated by a moral power. A full and firm acceptance of it is the *τελευταῖον ἐπιγεννήμα*—the consummation of that moral good on which it has worked throughout in the character, and without which it would not have been received at all.

Agreeably to this, is the manner in which all moral education is imparted. We give the child, whilst yet he is an infant in discretion, a very narrow principle by which he is to rule his conduct. We do not lay before him general principles of right, which would presuppose more moral and intellectual power for their application than are attainable at that early

^b Analogy, P. II. c. ult.

age. We give him positive commands to do this, to forbear that ; a rule of right so narrow and simple, that, if there be only the will to obey, he cannot go wrong. Still that will to obey is presupposed even in the case of the infant ; and without such an element in his nature, we could do nothing with him. As he grows older, and we find that he is docile to these first moral leadings, we give him principles of greater and greater latitude, which imply an increase of that moral power with which he commenced. We lay before him, first, the precepts of the particular virtues ; we call upon him to be temperate, and brave, and just, and prudent ; which it would be vain to do, before, as yet, he has learned the excellence of obedience, and made his general sense of right more distinct, by specific application of it in his conduct. These generalities would otherwise only bewilder him. He might have an indistinct apprehension of the right, but would be quite at a loss to apply it. At last, when his character is formed, as we express it ; when we find that he both knows and applies the precepts of the particular virtues with readiness and constancy ; we feel that we can trust him with the widest principle ; that it is

enough to tell him to do his duty; and in this ultimate state, we as fully expect a successful result, because we know that the principles to which the general rule appeals have already been worked into the heart.^c

II. In considering the intellectual process by which moral truth is to be sought, it must be premised on this head, that actual observation of human life, including the study of the heart, is the indispensable preliminary to this class of sciences, no less than to those of the physical student. Every man must, to some extent, train his own mind more especially for studies of this kind. No lessons here are equal to those which each individual collects from his own observations. They come home to his mind, at once, with their truth and their evidence.

But the question is how to obtain these lessons: by what tract of study may we promise ourselves most success in the pursuit of moral truth? I have partly anticipated my answer to this question, in what I remarked in my last Lecture, as to the several branches of inquiry included under Moral Philosophy.

^c This particular illustration was suggested to me in conversation by a friend.

By distinguishing between the studies belonging to Moral Philosophy, as they refer to the natural foundation of moral principles, or as they are conversant about moral principles in themselves, I have indicated the course with which we should commence. No one must account himself a moral philosopher, without some acquaintance with those kindred sciences which I there particularly referred to, as Politics, Rhetoric, Poetics, Logic; and more especially without some elements of that philosophy which consists in a knowledge of man, of the passions by which human nature is swayed, and the phenomena in general of human behaviour: such a study, I mean, pursued independently of all moral systems and theories of conduct.

I have already touched generally on the method of investigation which Moral Philosophy demands, in common with all science, and more particularly of the use of the doctrine of Final Causes in moral inquiries.

There are, however, two methods of inquiry spoken of by moral philosophers, which I must not pass without a more distinct consideration. "There are two ways," says Butler, "in which

the subject of morals may be treated. One begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of things; the other from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy, or constitution; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is, which is correspondent to this whole nature. In the former method, the conclusion is expressed thus, that vice is contrary to the nature and reason of things; in the latter, that it is a violation, or breaking in upon, our own nature. Thus they both lead us to the same thing—our obligations to the practice of virtue; and thus they exceedingly strengthen and enforce each other. The first seems the most direct formal proof, and, in some respects, the least liable to cavil and dispute: the latter is, in a peculiar manner, adapted to satisfy a fair mind, and is more easily applicable to the several particular relations and circumstances in life.”^d

You will recognize the same division in Aristotle's *Ethics*, where he speaks of the method *from* principles, and *to* principles, ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχαίου, and ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς, and decides on the latter as adequate to the purpose of ethical

^d Pref. p. vi.

inquiry, and the method which he designed to follow in his own Treatise.

It is the difference, in short, which modern writers commonly mark by the terms *analysis* and *synthesis*. In the former, we take the facts of human nature as we find them, and resolve them into the principles and laws of our nature; in the other, we assume certain general truths as the elements of our reasoning, and deduce the particular rules of conduct from these. We have apposite illustrations of these different methods in the works of Clarke and of Butler: Clarke, in his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, and his *Discourse on Natural and Revealed Religion*, proceeding on the assumption of primary truths existing in the mind, relations of things discoverable to us by the intellect; and from these drawing out in connected series the laws of religion and morality: Butler, on the contrary, commencing with observation of the facts of the moral world, as they appear on the face of nature, and analysing these into the moral laws involved in them. No moral truth is assumed *as such* by Butler, and there is no *necessity* of inference, accordingly, attending his conclusions. His premises are physical truth: it is his conclusions only

that are properly moral. And hence it is, that Butler speaks of his own method as more open to cavil : it has not that cogent force of demonstration which conclusions, systematically deduced from admitted moral principles, carry with them. The inference may be denied, while the premises are admitted in his reasonings, without absurdity ; which cannot be the case, where the principles are admitted as moral truths, and the conclusion necessarily follows from them. At the same time, he characterizes his method, as “ in a peculiar manner adapted to satisfy a fair mind.” It appeals, that is, more to the feelings of candour, and simplicity, and honesty, than the other mode of inquiry, which is strictly an address to the intellect. And those accordingly, whose minds are open to conviction, will receive this peculiar evidence resulting from observation ; while those who are prepared to cavil may easily object to it, as inconclusive and unsatisfactory to their reason.

From what I have already said in other Lectures, as well as in this, there can be no room to doubt which of these methods is the best to be pursued by the moral philosopher. The former method, — that which proceeds from the abstract relations of things, — may be

useful for giving a systematic combination to the results of our inquiries, and may follow in order therefore, as a mode of classing and arranging truths ascertained ; but is invalid in itself. Indeed, all the truth which, as a moral system, it possesses, must result from a previous process of analysis ; otherwise the principles which it assumes, as the basis of its argument, would be mere hypotheses. As a demonstration, it would carry its intrinsic validity in it, though the relations of human life were only shadows, and man, a phantom : like the demonstrations of Euclid, which, as has been observed, would hold perfectly true, though there were no such thing as a triangle or circle in actual existence.

To Analysis, then, I call your attention, as the business to which you are applying yourselves in the study of Moral Philosophy. You must decompose the facts presented to your notice, reject what is irrelevant to your purpose, seize the moral point of view, and endeavour to comprize that for yourselves in terms which shall exactly circumscribe it. Study the Ethics of Aristotle ; and you will observe him constantly employed in this analytical process. Examine, for instance, the mode in which he draws out his theory of

happiness, and you will find it to consist in analysing ; in rejecting, and excluding, what is foreign to the fact of which he is in search ; and only terminating his inquiry when he has completed this process.

Supposing, then, you are in the proper path of inquiry—that your minds are in the right condition for receiving Moral Evidence, and that you have commenced by the method of analysis ; I proceed to point out the importance of erudition to the moral philosopher,—of an acquaintance with the history of ethical philosophy, and with the connexion and origin of the theories belonging to your subject.

I. It is indispensably necessary, then, in the study of Moral Theories, that you should consider to what systems they have succeeded, and to what they are opposed. This consideration is commonly omitted in practice ; and yet there is none more essential for the right understanding of moral as well as religious doctrines. We are apt to regard the statements of both these classes of truths, as they nakedly come before us in the form of detached doctrines ; whereas, when we come to be

acquainted with their history, we find that they are not insulated, but dependent and relative assertions, arising out of a previous condition of discussion on the subject, and deriving their whole mode of expression from that circumstance. Thus, in theology, a knowledge of ecclesiastical history shows the sincere student of it, that the formal enunciations of doctrines are polemical statements, shaped by their controversial opposition to other opinions;—that their antithetical sense accordingly, and not their direct apparent one, is the sense in which they are to be read. The opinions of Arius and of Athanasius, for instance, are to be understood with reference to the speculations then afloat on the sacred subject of them; those of Augustine, in like manner, on the question of Divine Agency, in reference to positions maintained by disputants of the times. The same principle holds equally in Moral Philosophy; and the want of attention to it has led to much misconception of moral theories, as well as of theological doctrines. An acquaintance, in fact, with the history of philosophy, is as indispensable for obtaining a right notion of any particular moral theory, as ecclesiastical history is to the student of theology. Take, for instance, the

theory of Benevolence—that which resolves the whole nature of Virtue into a principle of Benevolence, or makes *right* synonymous with *benevolent*. It is clear that this theory did not rise up spontaneously ; was not, I mean, without its antecedent in some former system. Had there not been a theory of selfishness, a system which made self-love the universal principle of conduct, identifying *right* with the *expedient*, we should not have had, as I conceive, the principle of Benevolence insisted on in the way in which some moralists have speculated concerning it. The opinion evidently was a reaction from the opposite. In the dislike of the selfish theory, philosophers were tempted to carry their refutation of it to the utmost, and maintain the negative of it in the strongest terms of antithesis. But there was no other so forcible mode of denying the theory, as by positively affirming and defending its contrary—that no virtuous action whatever is selfish ; or, in other words, that the only principle of right conduct is Benevolence. Rightly to understand, therefore, the theory as originally taken up, we must look to its antecedent, to which it was opposed ; and interpret it rather as a denial that man is governed entirely by selfish interest, than as a positive assertion

that benevolence is the exclusive principle of conduct. Yet in sound it is so—and soon, so far is the mind the dupe of its own assumptions, the theory comes to be maintained in the positive sense, if not by the leaders in the controversy, at any rate by the disciples of their school. The very action, indeed, of controversy has this effect. When a tenet is opposed, its advocates, like the man in the fable wrestling with the wind, fold their mantle still more closely around them; when, if the sunshine of popular approbation had struck warmly on them, they would have worn it carelessly, or cast it away. Their wits are sharpened for the conflict by the collision, and their opinion is regarded as a work on which labour and cost have been expended, and which demands, therefore, some further exertion on their part for its completion. Thus they are led on, by the seductions of controversy, to defend points not originally contemplated by them, to give a harder, stronger outline to their theory, and imperceptibly to sacrifice even the truth, while they labour to give a bold relief to some principal object. We must not take, therefore, all that the advocates of an opinion have said concerning it, as evidence of what was originally intended by the opinion. It has

grown in its course ; and accordingly, to consider it rightly, we must revert to the opinions out of which it grew ; we must trace it back to the controversies which gave occasion to it, and so lay hold of it in its original form of opposition.

There is, in fact, in the debatable region of Moral Science, a cycle of opinions, not indeed invariably succeeding one another in the same order, but so that the same opinions occasionally reappear as the sequence of others. The selfish theory itself arose out of an attempt to carry the doctrine of disinterestedness too far. If some insisted that no action could be virtuous, as it proceeded from an interested motive ; some again, startled by the paradox, would turn their attention to the more accurate analysis of the principle of self-love ; and they would notice those many instances of human life in which, men, so far from erring on the side of self-love, even show a culpable want of it, as in acts of evident imprudence. From such instances, it would appear that self-love was a principle which the moralist could not dispense with ; and thus, from a contemplation of it in its real importance, and stimulated by the excitement of controversy, philosophers would be found to rest exclusively in the

principle of the expedient as the sole basis of right.

A French philosopher, indeed, of great metaphysical acumen, M. Cousin, has reduced all systems of philosophy under the four heads of Sensualism, Idealism, Scepticism, and Mysticism; and has endeavoured to evince that these systems, or, at least, the last two, follow in a constant order of succession.^c The ingenious author, however, it must be admitted, has here carried his Platonic prepossessions too far, and strained his theory to greater exactness than the facts will warrant. But whether this be so or not, the facts on which his theory is founded, at any rate, amount to a proof of the point on which I am now insisting;—that no moral theory stands alone, but has an essential relation to some antecedent. Either it is the continuation of a previous system under an extreme form impressed on it by the force of controversy, or it is a reaction from another in an opposite direction.

Let me illustrate this, however, further to you; and from those authors to whom your academical studies particularly call your attention.

^c Histoire de la Phil. du XVIII^e Siècle. 4^e Leçon, p. 165, &c.

How imperfectly will the teaching of Socrates be understood by those who consider simply the enunciations of moral truth attributed to him, and who examine his doctrines merely in themselves. Certainly there will be no just appreciation of his spirit of philosophy by such a method. Look, on the other hand, to the system which preceded him. Observe how all philosophy was become a mere technical system, a matter of erudition and professional art, a mysterious initiation into the secrets of nature, or a sophistical discipline of political power. Studying all the circumstances of the age of philosophy in which he appeared, we begin to take a new view of his system of teaching. We find that his wisdom consists not in the maxims which he promulgated, in the greater accuracy, or comprehensiveness, or purity of the precepts which he delivered, but in the homeliness with which he sought to invest philosophy, the social conversational character in which he introduced it into the houses and streets of Athens. It is remarkable that, succeeding to a literary period, he left no monument of his science in writings. For his case was not like that of Pythagoras in this respect. In the age of Pythagoras, philosophy had not put off its religious garb,

and consistently maintained the silence and reserve, and undefined form, of an unwritten, traditional, authoritative wisdom. The *αὐτός ἐφα* of the Pythagorean school was in its place there, as the reason and apology of the whole system. Had it descended to written expositions at first, it would have thrown off the mask under which it was acting its part on the scene of the world. But with Socrates the case was quite different. A literary philosophy was then established. And we are accordingly to take up his unwritten lessons, as an innovation on the prevailing method, and a counteraction of that method, and a return to the Pythagorean system of oral instruction, without its mystery and reserve. He found that philosophy was become inactive and powerless, had lost that real control over men which it had once possessed, — that, in being converted into a literary pursuit, it had soared to heights of speculation, inaccessible to the many, and irrelevant to all influence on the world. He therefore set himself to bring it down from its didactic form, to that of familiar intercourse; and so to regain for it the influence which it obtained under the Pythagoreans. Hence the charge of atheism against him. He wished to

give philosophy that ascendancy in human life, which paganism had usurped, and possessed exclusively, when philosophy, disjoined from the popular superstitions, erected itself into a literary discipline. He attracted the jealousy of superstition, because he substituted another practical method, which, though it inculcated obedience to established religions, virtually dispensed with all.^f You may observe, throughout the dialogues of his two great expositors, how entirely he is engaged in restoring this practical influence to philosophy, not only from his teaching by conversation, but from the characters and persons among whom he is usually introduced. They are, generally, young men,—persons on whose minds he could expect to exercise some influence. And thus the burthen of the accusation against him was, that he was “corrupting the young men.” Thus, too, when any of the interlocutors is represented as essaying a lengthened argument, or dissertation on any subject, Plato makes Socrates interrupt him, complain

^f Speaking of the popular fables, he says, Οὐ δύναμαι πω κατὰ τὸ Δελφικὸν γράμμα γινῶναι ἑμαυτόν· γελοῖον δὲ μοι φαίνεται, τοῦτο ἔτι ἀγνοοῦντα, τὰ ἀλλότρια σκοπεῖν· ὅθεν δὲ χαίρειν ἑάσας ταῦτα, περὶ ὧν περὶ τῶ νομιζομένῳ περὶ αὐτῶν, ὁ νῦν δὲ ἔλεγον, σκοπῶ οὐ ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ ἑμαυτόν, κ. τ. λ.—*Phædr.* p. 285.

of his forgetfulness and dulness of apprehension, and call back the disputant to the manner of conversation by question and reply, and to all the little matters of ordinary experience and use, which didactic science disdained to notice.^g In the dialogue of the *Phædrus* (composed by Plato when he was young, and more the disciple imbued with his master's wisdom, than himself the master of a new school), we have the peculiar spirit of the teaching of Socrates depicted in a striking passage, in which written instruction is compared with oral.^h He observes that the former is inadequate, except for the purpose of suggestion to the author,ⁱ that words written are like pictures, which "stand as if they were alive, but if you ask them any thing, keep a very dignified silence." Thus, he says, written discourses are unable to explain or vindicate themselves when attacked, being tossed before every one indiscriminately, whether fit

^g Ἐμέ γε ἔλαθεν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐμῆς οὐδενείας, *Phædr.* p. 295.—
Ἐγὼ τυγχάνω ἐπιλήσμων τις ὢν ἄνθρωπος, *Protag.* p. 136,
et alib.—Νῆ τοὺς θεοῦς, ἀτεχνῶς γε αἰεὶ σκυτέας τε καὶ κναφέας
καὶ μαγείρους λέγων καὶ ἰατροὺς οὐδὲν παύη, ὥς περὶ τούτων
ἡμῖν ὄντα τὸν λόγον.—*Gorgias*, p. 96.

^h *Phædr.* p. 379, *et sqq.*

ⁱ This was probably the principle of the acroamatic or esoteric writings of the ancient philosophers.

or unfit to receive them. “Much better,” he adds, “are the pains bestowed, when one employing the *dialectical art* (or *vivâ voce* discussion) on an apt soul, plants and sows in it with science words that are able to succour both themselves and their planter, and not unfruitful, but bearing seed,” &c. It would appear, accordingly, that it was no *system* of philosophy that Socrates taught; it was no theory of morals, which he set up in opposition to the physics of his day. So far from being opposed to physical studies, as is commonly represented, he expressly recommends, in the Dialogue of Plato, to which I have just referred, an acquaintance with natural philosophy as necessary to the orator; referring to the instance of Pericles, whose eloquence he attributes to the large physical knowledge which that great man had obtained from Anaxagoras.^k But what he laboured to accomplish was, to make philosophy an effective instrument of moral power—a discipline of life, and not a mere science. And the technical professional philosophy which preceded him, is the solution of such an endeavour. It

^k Μετεωρολογίας ἐμπλησθεῖς, καὶ ἐπὶ φύσιν νοῦ τε καὶ ἀνοίας ἀφικόμενος, κ.τ.λ.—Plato, *Phædrus*, p. 370. Also Cicero *de Orat.* III. c. 34, and *Orator*, c. 4.

is the extreme from which his method is the reaction; to which, therefore, we must refer, in order to have any just understanding of the philosophy of Socrates.¹

What I have instanced in Socrates, might be shown at much length of Plato and Aristotle. Neither of these great leaders of the Schools can be properly understood, without a study of their antecedents. How little, indeed, is a dialogue of Plato appreciated at the first reading? There is enough on the surface to astonish and delight us; but still we rise from the perusal with an impression of something mysterious remaining to be further explored; and that, not from any obscurity of the style, but from indistinct, unsatisfied perceptions of the deep and picturesque genius of the author, requiring a more refined imaginative power in ourselves for its right understanding. But we find a great light thrown on his whole philosophy, when we refer it to its precursors;

¹ Observe, in further illustration of this, the caution which he gives the young Hippocrates, about the persons from whom he would seek instruction: telling him that knowledge is not like a commodity which one may carry away in vessels, and afterwards use, if wholesome; but what must be retained in the mind, either for harm or good, after once it has been received.—*Protag.* p. 94.

and consider what their influence would be on a mind of such high temper, so rich in eloquence and poetry, as that of Plato. It is sufficiently striking that he should have written entirely in the form of dialogue. We are to seek the reason of this, then, in the conversational method of Socrates. Still it is in *writing*, not in mere conversation, that he delivers his thoughts. Philosophy, in his hands, resumes its literary character, but it still mixes with men in daily intercourse. It now instructs, like the drama, the oratory, and the sculpture of Greece, by addressing itself to the cultivated taste, the lofty imagination, and enterprising genius of the age; while its gifted teacher seems to be only sketching to the life the homely irony of his master. Plato follows Socrates, and yet he departs from him, and counteracts him.^m Socrates supplanted the influence of Religion by that

^m Cicero, speaking of the systematic perfection given to philosophy, first, more indiscriminately by Plato, and then with exactness by Xenocrates and Aristotle, says:—"Ita facta est, quod minime Socrates probabat, ars quædam philosophiæ, et rerum ordo, et descriptio disciplinæ."—*Acad. Quæst.* I. c. 4.

So of the Stoics:—"Et breviter sane, minimeque obscure exposita est, inquam, a te, Varro, et veteris Academiæ ratio, et Stoicorum. Verum esse autem arbitror, ut Antiocho,

of Philosophy; Plato revived the influence of Religion, and infused it into the philosophy itself of Socrates. Hence the enthusiasm which he has breathed into his most abstract discussions; hence the brilliant cloud of mystery, which lightly hangs over his doctrines.

Again, you may contemplate in Aristotle the antagonist of the Platonic enthusiasm. His severe didactic method is a reaction from the artist-philosophy of Plato. He confesses his admiration of the vastness and exquisiteness of thought displayed in the Socratic conversations;ⁿ but he felt the need of a more sober, less imaginative method, to satisfy the requisitions of his own analytical mind. That he possessed also himself an exquisite taste, and could have recommended his compositions by the charm of a more eloquent style, we may judge, not only from his scientific discussions of the principles of taste, but from the terse elegance of his sentences, when he occasionally relaxes from the rigour prescribed by his method.^o But he found

nostro familiari, placebat, *correctionem veteris Academicæ potius, quam aliquam novam disciplinam putandam.*"—*Acad. Quæst.* I. c. 12.

ⁿ Polit. II. c. 4.

^o Both Cicero and Quintilian (*Inst. Orat.* X. c. 1,) have spoken of the eloquence of Aristotle.

that philosophy had been carried by Plato into an imaginary region, and its principles pushed, in the subtilty of speculation, into evanescent entities,—the “ideas,” as they were called, of the intellectual world, independent of the facts of experience. At once, therefore, he abandoned that seductive method of discussion which had ministered to the enthusiasm of Plato, and directed the acute powers of his unimpassioned reason against the specious doctrine of Ideas. In the zeal of his opposition, accordingly, he deviated into the opposite extreme, and made his philosophy too exclusively logical, and too empirical in its basis. It left nothing beyond the reach of argumentative deduction; but carried into every department of knowledge the positiveness and precision of logical definition and classification.

But these are only some leading particulars of contrast between the systems of Plato and Aristotle. I might carry observations of this kind much further, so as more fully to illustrate to you the matter in hand, that no philosophy can be justly estimated without reference to other systems with which it is connected. But these instances may suffice for my purpose. They may put you on your guard against a

precipitate criticism of any theories presented to your notice, and invite you to a diligent and exact study of the history of philosophy, in order to a just decision on the nature and merits of each system.

II. There is another rule in connexion with that just mentioned: and that is, to avoid the excessive pursuit of consistency in the investigation of moral theories. Consistency has the air of truth, but it is not always the truth. For though, in the result, every thing is harmonious with the truth, yet the inquirer himself may not be able to detect the real harmony; and he must not reject what appears otherwise to be true, because he cannot reconcile it with some admitted principle. The fault of not attending to this rule in Theology is shown in those extreme views of Predestination and Freewill, which mutually exclude one another. Deduce the logical consequence of either extreme separately taken; and if you are to be ruled by mere consistency, you must deny the other. Those, however, who are more intent on the facts as they are in nature and in Scripture, than on the unity of system, will see that they cannot reject either doctrine, without shutting their eyes to evidence, and will despise the

imputation of inconsistency, whilst they resolutely hold to the truth in both. It occurs to us more frequently to notice this in questions of Theology, in which, conflicting truths, from the nature of the subject, are brought more strongly into contrast. But the same thing occurs also in moral questions. Take, for instance, the ancient theory which made Pleasure the chief good. Are we to say, with Cicero, that we must not consider what the advocate of it may urge against the licentiousness of his theory, but only what is consistent for him to say, *quid ei consentaneum sit dicere*. In that case, we should condemn the theory, as Cicero does, most unphilosophically, as well as unjustly. That mode of reasoning is, at any rate, not the proper refutation. If a doctrine is unsound, the facts from which it is drawn must be examined for the detection of the error. If the theory appears to be a just conclusion from these, we must retain it, though it may involve us in speculative difficulties.

At the same time, should an explicit contradiction of known truth result, in the way of consequence, from any supposed theory, reason would demand that we should hold that theory in the light of a mere hypothesis, and seek for its proper refutation, which surely

must exist in the facts on which it professes to be founded. But we must not be too ready to suppose that every inconsistency is such a contradiction. Nothing marks a hasty superficial judgment, more than a readiness to construe statements, which it cannot reconcile, into absolute contradictions. It requires some reach of thought, some philosophical power, to see, or anticipate, the existence of harmony amidst apparent inconsistencies; and the hasty critic accordingly dismisses the difficulty summarily, by asserting an impossibility in the case; which at least sets his own mind at rest on the subject. But this mode of proceeding, whilst it exhibits us unfair judges of the opinions of others, is peculiarly injurious to us in our own investigations of truth. It is a sort of *μικρολογία* in philosophy; it diverts our attention to the calculation of minute expenditure, when the enterprise of discovery on which we have embarked demands the magnificence of a large liberality. We may, indeed, avoid the censure of narrow observers; but we shall want that noble confidence in the truth, which can alone be successful in the search after it, by engaging us in the work at all hazards. I speak not of personal consequences, arising from the disagreement of our

opinions with prevailing prejudices, and the obloquy and dislike which we may incur from such opposition; though this, of course, is among the trials which lie in the path of the searcher after moral truth. But it is the refractoriness of our own intellect to which I here allude—the difficulty of admitting what seems at variance with our former convictions, and the trial resulting from that to every one in the prosecution of moral inquiries.

III. Another no less important rule in the pursuit of Moral Philosophy must not be omitted. You must be especially on your guard against the metaphorical language, in which the truths of science are variously conveyed in different systems. You must endeavour to take up the nomenclature of each science with the utmost impartiality; not construing mere analogies, the technical expressions of particular systems, as part of the substantive truth of the things which you are studying. It is surprising to what extent this caution has been neglected among philosophers. Indeed the study of the influence which the technical language of science has exercised on it, will form a very considerable part of your business, in acquainting your-

selves with the History of Philosophy. Consider, for example, the influence which the introduction of the term End, τέλος, has had in moral speculation. It is this which has given occasion to such discussions as those contained in the *De Finibus* of Cicero,—to comparison of the several “ends” pursued in life,—and a decision, founded on that comparison, of the most final end, as the Chief Good of man.^p In reality, there is no foundation for these discussions; the real point to be determined by the moralist, in such an inquiry, being, What is the general law of those facts which evidence the Activity of Man? The rest of the discussion raised on the point takes its character from the nomenclature.

Examples might be multiplied on this point. But no more striking instance is presented, than by the influence which the term *Idea*

^p Aristotle feels the influence of this nomenclature, but it does not infect his ethical system. Τὸ δ' ἄριστον τέλειόν τι φαίνεται· ὥστ' εἰ μὲν ἔστιν ἓν τι μόνον τέλειον, τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη τὸ ζητούμενον· εἰ δὲ πλείω, τὸ τελειότατον τούτων.—*Ethic. Nic. I. 7.*

Even Butler sometimes throws his observations into the same form. Thus arguing the absurdity of supposing a series of means without an end, he says:—“This is the same absurdity with respect to life, as an infinite series of effects without a cause, is in speculation.”—*Sermon XIII.* p. 231.

has had in modern philosophy. It is curious to trace the history of this term through the schools of Alexandria and the philosophy of the middle ages, to the revival of science. Under the cover of this metaphysical expression, the refined Materialism of the Platonic philosophy insinuated itself into modern systems. It is thus that Locke is enabled to speak of the notions of the mind as simple and compounded; and, closely following the worst part of that Scholastic Logic which he rejected, to describe acts of judgment as the result of a *comparison of ideas*.[†] Had he simply used the term *Idea*, and guarded against the metaphor contained in it, he would have had no foundation for these assertions. To inquire into the *nature* of ideas, is an arbitrary speculation on what has no existence but in the nomenclature of Science. The admirable perspicuity and sincere manly reason with which Locke inculcated his theory of Ideas, perpetuated this delusion in the minds

[†] See M. Cousin, Hist. de la Philos. du XVIII^e Siècle, 21^e, 22^e, et 23^e Leç. Paris. 1829. Much of the metaphysical discussion contained in M. Cousin's second volume will be repulsive to the English reader, in the present distaste among us for such kind of study; but it will amply repay the trouble of those who desire to take a just view of the philosophy of Locke.

of succeeding philosophers; by whom it was carried to extremes which its author never contemplated. It gave occasion to the idealism of Berkeley, the scepticism of Hume, and the materialism of Priestley,—so many vast exemplifications of the evil of mixing up the technical analogies of a science with its real truths.

expected in favor of Butler

I have now, I hope, said enough, in the way of introduction to the studies to which it is my duty to solicit your especial attention. I have not kept back from your view the arduousness of the studies themselves; but in pointing out the difficulties, I have also brought before you their commanding interest and importance. I have endeavoured also to facilitate your access to them, by discussing the leading principle on which all moral inquiry proceeds,—the method of investigation which it pursues,—the nature of the evidence on which it rests,—the different inquiries into which it branches,—and last of all, in this present Lecture, the mode in which the study should be pursued. From the limits I proposed to myself, as wishing to comprise this introductory matter in the shortest compass, I have been obliged to touch on several points with rapidity. But as questions relative to them must occur, in more

discussions hereafter on particular theories and periods of Moral Philosophy, I have thought it unnecessary to be more explicit on them on the present occasion. I have judged it also the more necessary to premise such observations, as I have submitted to you in the present Course of Lectures; because, so far as I am aware, there is no work to which I could refer you, as a general introduction to the study of Moral Philosophy. There are extant some excellent introductions, in the form of historical dissertations on the subject. In particular, I may refer you to the Dissertations of Dugald Stewart and Sir James Mackintosh, prefixed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and which have obtained a merited celebrity. Still these do not supply any distinct information as to the characteristics of moral inquiry, do not address themselves to the task of putting the mind of the student in the proper posture for entering on this peculiar study. This want, then, I have endeavoured to supply by the present Course.

Before I conclude, however, you will perhaps expect that I should more expressly recommend to you a particular line of reading,

in furtherance of the same object. If, then, I am to advise according to the tenor of my former observations, my first recommendation would be to the accurate study of those great authors which the University places in your hands, as Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Horace; not to mention others, on the same splendid list of writers, no less deserving of your notice. Speaking to Oxford men, I should feel myself untrue to the spirit of the place, as well as to my own predilections, were I not to call your attention, in the first instance, to these, your commissioned instructors, as I may term them. Yet I would not be understood to do so in disparagement of modern authors; but simply as suggesting to you that line of reading with which I think it best to *begin*. It is your main business here to master these authors; and I would lay hold, therefore, of that study in which you are already engaged, and urge you to apply it to its most important result, the laying the foundation of an enlarged moral observation and moral wisdom. It is one thing to read Thucydides merely for a knowledge of the events of Greek History, and another thing to learn from his narrative the motives of human conduct, the influence of the characters of men

on the circumstances of the world, and, reciprocally, of those circumstances on the characters of men. You may read the sedition of Corcyra, or the conduct of the Sicilian expedition, with the interest merely of the reader of a romance, or the curiosity of the antiquarian, or the taste of the philologist and the critic. But what a charm may be thrown over the study, when you read in these masterly sketches the history of man as a moral being, when you trace in them the developments of that moral nature which you feel in yourselves, and sympathize with its varied manifestations in the events brought before your eye? So, in Homer—rich as the intellectual feast is which, in the profusion of his poetic inspiration, he spreads before you,—the most exquisite delight, I am persuaded, which results from the reading of him, is from that profound knowledge of the human heart which he reveals in every line, and which imparts to his writings so exquisite a pathos, beyond, perhaps, every other human composition. Let Homer be read with an eye directed to this point of view; learn to look at human nature as he beheld it, by meditating on his thoughts; and you may be sure you are in that track which will lead, if pursued,

to the “serene temples” of Moral Science. You will not, however, terminate your studies in those authors alone. He who has read Herodotus, and Thucydides, and Tacitus, will also proceed to his own Raleigh and Clarendon; and the admirer of Homer will not be unversed in Shakespeare, and Milton, and Dryden, and Pope. In philosophy, more especially, he would imbibe but little of the spirit of Plato, and Aristotle, and Cicero, who felt no curiosity to explore the thoughts of Bacon and of Locke. You will come, however, better prepared for the moral lessons of our own writers, by having first deeply imbued yourselves with the wisdom of the ancients.

In furtherance of the same system, I should recommend the study of the ancient moral philosophers, as the first thing to be accomplished in your course. In Xenophon, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Cicero, you have the most perfect model of philosophical discussion under every various form; and no study of modern ethics can at all compete, in point of discipline to the mind (and discipline of the mind is your great business now), with that which is employed on these masters of the science. But here I would not recommend the exclusive study of the classical works, even

at the first. Where the tone of thought on moral subjects must, from the very difference of institutions and customs, be so very different from our own, and it is an arduous matter even to work ourselves into a perception of the force of terms denoting moral ideas;—it is highly useful to unite with the reading of the ancients, authors in our own language. Besides, for the purpose of bringing the mind into the proper train of thought for entering on such inquiries methodically, it is necessary that we should have some general notions of the subject on which we are entering, of the kind of questions which it involves, and the information which it will impart to us. The Theory of Moral Sentiments of Adam Smith, Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, Dugald Stewart's Philosophy of the Active Powers, though, as separately viewed, imperfect works, may all be usefully read with this view;—not for the particular theories contained in them, but for the general insight which they will give into the nature of the subject. But the works which are most of all deserving of the attention of the moral student, and which will most assist him in understanding the Ethics of Aristotle, are the Analogy and Sermons of Bishop Butler. The Preface to the Sermons

is a very exact and clear statement of the method of inquiry pursued by the moral philosopher. If you proceed from that to the first three Sermons on Human Nature, you will have in hand a summary of the elements of the Science.

And here you should observe that there are two classes of writings, both of which are strictly denominated Ethical, but which convey a very different information on the subject. There are the simply practical treatises, such as the Offices of Cicero, and the chief part of Paley's work of Moral Philosophy. In these you have the rules of duty systematically deduced and arranged, without much, if any, discussion of the grounds on which they rest. Paley, indeed, commences with laying down a theory of Obligation; but it is not so much for the purpose of establishing a theory, as for the preliminary statement of a broad principle, from which the leading private and social duties of man may be consistently deduced. Cicero, in his Offices, takes up the Stoical principle—"Follow nature as your guide,"—and adopting also the ancient and commonly-received division of Virtue into the four heads, or cardinal virtues, as they were termed by

the Schoolmen, contents himself chiefly with drawing out the rules of a "reasonable" conduct in the various circumstances of life. There is, again, another class of ethical works which is almost entirely speculative. Cicero's *De Finibus*, for example, is a discussion of the question of the Chief Good, by examining the doctrines of the principal sects. Adam Smith's treatise, to which I have just referred, is directed to the establishment of a particular origin of the moral sentiments, though, in establishing that theory, he draws out, by the light of it, the leading principles of duty. Treatises of Casuistry,^r such as are employed in discussing questions of conduct, with a view to the decision of doubts and perplexities in action, almost form an intermediate class, being neither exclusively practical, nor exclusively speculative. I should rather, however, place them, as intended for guides to the doubting conscience, under the head of Practical Ethics.

It may be necessary, perhaps, further to remark, that this classification of ethical works is not coincident with the distinction mentioned on a former occasion, of the

^r Much of the third book of Cicero's *Offices* may be placed under this head.

question concerning the Nature of Virtue and the question into the Criterion of Virtue.^s Both these questions belong properly to the speculative head of Ethics ; though the former involves in it much practical matter. The Ethics of Aristotle, for example, are an inquiry into the Nature of Virtue ; but while they enter into abstract discussion, they expressly aim at influencing the conduct of men, by conveying practical instruction. But the practical treatises to which I refer, in contradistinction to the speculative, are such as, assuming the distinction of Virtue and Vice, present a system of morality, and explain and enforce the application of the rules of right. Such works, accordingly, leave the real business of the moral philosopher undone. They have their scientific use, as drawing the scattered rules of conduct into general principles, and introducing order and method into our moral views. But they must not be regarded as a final information on moral subjects, any more than, as scholars, you would regard the rules

^s It will be observed, that I have differed from the usual mode in stating these questions. Sir James Mackintosh calls the first, the " Criterion of Morality," and the second the " Theory of Moral Sentiments."—*Dissert.* p. 297.

of your grammars as a knowledge of the genius of the Greek or Latin language.

I have only to repeat my exhortation to you, to apply yourselves with diligence to the cultivation of Moral Science on its own independent grounds. I must strongly recommend it to you, not only as the index to all your other other studies, but as the best guide to those Divine contemplations to which Christianity invites you. When our Lord prescribed a method for knowing the Divine truth of his doctrine, he did not send the disciple to the scribes and doctors of the law; he appealed to the practical teachings of each man's own heart.[†] These, according to him, are the true authorities to which we must defer in our doubts; the living interpreters, which, if faithfully consulted, under Divine grace, cannot mislead the disciple; and that, because they are of his own Divine appointment, for the express purpose of directing us to practical truth. Refinements of speculation may, as experience has shown, obtain in their favour the authoritative sanction of those who sit in Moses' seat, and be

[†] John v. 11, 17; Luke vii. 35; xi. 34; xii. 57

inscribed with the title of oracles of God ; but they cannot stand the touchstone of the moral feelings. Whatever is of mere human invention, when tried by this test, will fly off as the baser material, while the authentic well-tempered metal will tell, by its fixedness, of the mine from which it comes. But then the feelings must be impartially and faithfully consulted. They must be brought under the survey of a large and enlightened Moral Philosophy. All the facts relating to them must be accurately explored and weighed. And though, perhaps, the practical judgments of common men are seldom mistaken,^u and the advice of the son of Sirach, “ In every good work trust thy own heart,” is so far just : yet this by no means supersedes the necessity of an exact study of our moral nature. On ordinary occasions of private conduct, common sense may prove a fair guide ; but on particular questions, connected with conduct or belief, brought before you for special decision, — questions on which passion, and prejudice, and erudition have been enlisted, — your common sense may mislead you, and you

^u “ Mirabile est, cum plurimum in faciendo intersit inter doctum et rudem, quam non multum differat in iudicando.”
—*Cicero, De Orat.* III. c. 51.

demand a more distinct information and discipline. The dictates of our moral nature are not, in fact, really listened to then; and common sense is not suffered to have free course. For such occasions, then, it is of the utmost importance to have traced beforehand the map of the human heart, by the light of moral philosophy and its subordinate studies. Above all, in questions of Theology, if you would be fair judges of what is true or false, what is scriptural or unscriptural, you need the information of such studies. There cannot be a greater mistake here, than to suppose that, by reading works of theology exclusively, you can arrive at a sound knowledge of theological questions. These are necessary to tell you what has been said, what has been argued concerning each point; but they do not inform the judging power of the mind. By such knowledge alone the mind may be formed to run in a groove, or revolve in a circle: it is not trained to masculine and free exertion. By a course of classical literature, on the contrary, accompanied throughout by the discipline of Moral Science, you are invigorated for every trial of judgment which may be brought to bear on you. Without, indeed, some knowledge of the heart and of the conduct of man,

it is impossible, I should say, rightly to appreciate the information which the history of religious controversy imparts. It is necessary to enable you to read, in their true sense, the opinions of the various disputants, and to thread your way through the labyrinth of entangled polemics. And not only is a sound ethical knowledge required; but it is further most necessary, in order to see your way clearly in travelling over this difficult ground, that you should be acquainted with those questions which have attended the progress of Moral Philosophy. For the contagion of these has not unfrequently reached the field of Christian disputation; and the Christian controversy must be interpreted by the light of its heathen prototype. The want of such knowledge may be perceived in the very inadequate information given, for the most part, by works of ecclesiastical history; which, as they have been generally written, are more like indices or tables of contents, than living chapters in the history of man.

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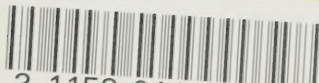
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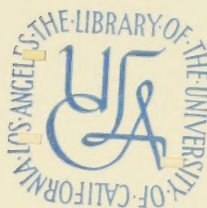


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